

PRABUDDHA BHARATA *or* **AWAKENED INDIA**

**A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896**



February 2013

Vol. 118, No. 2

₹ 10.00

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

The Great Teachers of the World – II

IN these great Teachers you will always find this sign: that they have intense faith in themselves. Such intense faith is unique, and we cannot understand it. We do not think of ourselves in the same way, and, naturally, we cannot understand them.

Then again, when they speak, the world is bound to listen. When they speak, each word is direct; it bursts like a bomb-shell. Sometimes they do not speak at all, but yet they convey the Truth from mind to mind. They come to give. They command, they are the Messengers; you have to receive the Command. Do you not remember in your own scriptures the authority with which Jesus speaks? 'Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations teaching them to observe all things whatsoever.

So, when each man stands and says 'My Prophet is the only true Prophet,' he is not correct—he knows not the alpha of religion. Religion is neither talk, nor theory, nor intellectual consent. It is realisation in the heart of our hearts; it is touching God; it is feeling, realising that I am a spirit in relation with the Universal Spirit and all Its great manifestations. If you have really entered the house of the Father, how can you have seen His children and not known them? And if you do not recognise them, you have not entered the house of the Father.



These great Messengers and Prophets are great and true. Why? Because, each one has come to preach a great idea. Take the Prophets of India, for instance. They are the oldest of the founders of religion. We take, first, Krishna. You who have read the Gita see all through the book that the one idea is non-attachment. Remain unattached. The heart's love is due to only One. To whom? To Him who never changeth. Who is that One? It is God. Do not make the mistake of giving the heart to anything that is changing, because that is misery. You may give it to a man; but if he dies, misery is the result. You may give it to a friend, but he may tomorrow become your enemy. If you give it to your husband, he may one day quarrel with you. You may give it to your wife, and she may die the day after tomorrow. Now, this is the way the world is going on.. This is what our scriptures say. Wherever there is love, wherever there is a spark of joy, know that to be a spark of His presence because He is joy, blessedness, and love itself. Without that there cannot be any love.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 4.120-134.



RP - Sanjiv Goenka
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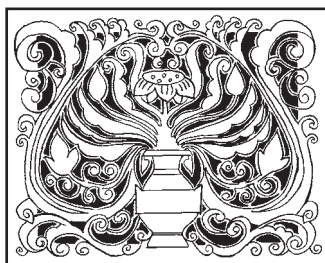
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Vol. 118, No. 2
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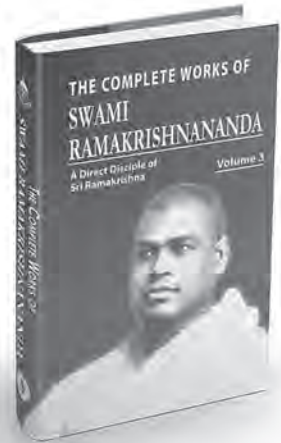
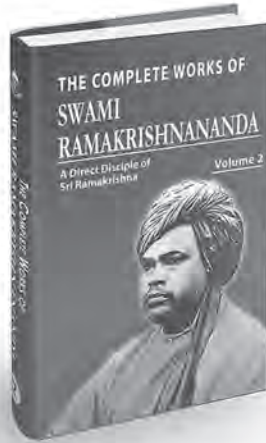
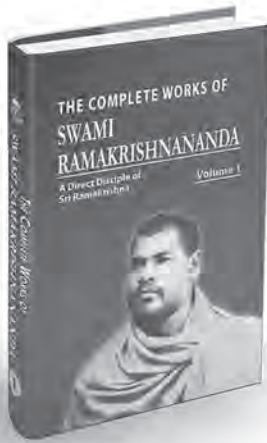
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Our Infinite Nature

February 2013

Vol. 118, No. 2

वालाग्रशतभागस्य शतधा कल्पितस्य च ।

भागो जीवः स विज्ञेयः स चानन्त्यायकल्पते ॥

That jiva is to be known as of the size of the tip of a hair, imagined to be divided into a hundredth of its hundredth part; yet it happens to be infinite.

(Shvetashvatara Upanishad, 5.9)

यस्यानुवित्तः प्रतिबुद्ध आत्मास्मिन्सन्देहो गहने प्रविष्टः ।

स विश्वकृत् स हि सर्वस्य कर्ता तस्य लोकः स उ लोक एव ॥

He who has realized and intimately known the Atman that has entered this perilous and inaccessible place (the body), is the maker of the universe, for he is the maker of all, (all is) his Atman, and he again is indeed the Atman (of all).

(Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.4.13)

निर्विकल्पमनन्तं च हेतुदृष्टान्तवर्जितम् ।

अप्रमेयमनादिं च यज्ज्ञात्वा मुच्यते बुधः ॥

(Brahman is) without doubt, endless, beyond reason and analogy, beyond all proofs and causeless, knowing which the wise one becomes free.

(Amritabindu Upanishad, 9)

एष सर्वेश्वर एष सर्वज्ञ एषोऽन्तर्याम्येष

योनिः सर्वस्य प्रभवाण्ययौ हि भूतानाम् ॥

This one is the Lord of all; this one is omniscient; this one is the inner director (of all); this one is the source of all; this one is verily the place of origin and dissolution of all beings.

(Mandukya Upanishad, 6)

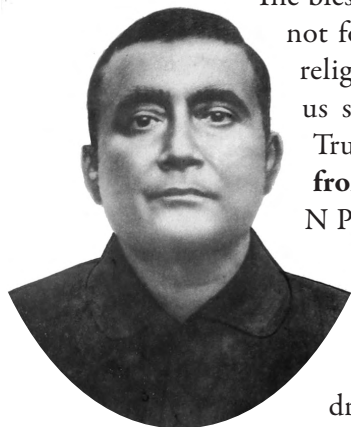
THIS MONTH

Weighed down with innumerable beliefs in its long history, the mind has to be purified in order to go **Beyond the Known** and realize the Reality.

Nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come to manifest. Dr Satish K Kapoor, Ex-British Council scholar and registrar of Dayananda Anglo Vedic University, Jalandhar, writes of **Vivekananda's Impact on the World of Ideas**.

Swami Vivekananda was a lover of humankind. Dr Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti shows in **Vivekananda's Thoughts on Society** how Swamiji presented Vedantic principles in order to raise society. The author is a famous and respected researcher of medieval Assamese literature with many books to his credit.

Prof. Vijaya Kumar Murty of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Toronto speaks on the importance and relevance of **Spiritual Values for the Youth**.

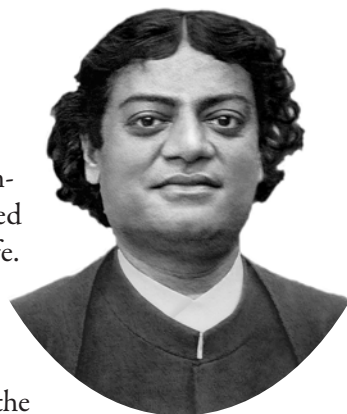


The blessings of great souls are not for leading comfortable religious lives but to make us struggle to realize the Truth. In **Divine Blessings from a Divine Being A P N Pankaj**, an eminent littérateur from Chandigarh, writes about Swamiji's blessings to his disciple Saratchandra Chakravarty.

People often find themselves standing confused at the crossroads of life.

In His Call Beckons

Dr Joyesh Bagchi shows how Swamiji's teachings awaken in us the strength to struggle and find direction and fulfilment. The author is a geologist with the Geological Survey of India, New Delhi.



With tremendous worldwide social and individual changes humans are shutting themselves off from the reality of their existence. In **The Being of Humankind** Prof. S C Malik, of India International Centre, Asia Project, New Delhi, writes why and how we need to reorient our consciousness.

In the fifth part of **Eternal Words**,

Swami Adbhutananda speaks on worldly possessions and worldly wisdom and the need to rely on God. The swami's words are translated from *Sat Katha*, published by Udbodhan Office, Kolkata.



The tenth instalment of **Svarajya Siddhibh: Attaining Self-dominion**, by the eighteenth century Gangadharendra Saraswati, fifteenth pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham, Kanchipuram, explains the jarring viewpoints of different philosophies and Vedanta's teachings about Brahman.

Beyond the Known

HUMANS, with their ingenuity and intelligence, behave sometimes like devas and at other times like asuras, and themselves have wondered at such an awful contradiction. One may find various causes, according to one's beliefs, but the most credible explanation is that as a species rises higher, it encapsulates or embodies all the preceding evolutionary stages or characteristics it has risen from. A human being thus is a microcosm of the violent, yet remarkable, evolutionary history of life on Earth. Far from being shocked, this is an ennobling and humbling thought. Vedanta goes even further and shows a higher unity of all existence, as the *Chhandogya Upanishad* says: 'The inferior ones get included in the *krita* (upper dice face) when it becomes a winner.'

Sri Ramakrishna describes what he saw in one of his visions: 'He [God] revealed to me a huge reservoir with green scum. The wind moved a little of the scum and immediately the water became visible; but in the twinkling of an eye, scum from all sides came dancing in and again covered the water. He revealed to me that the water was like Satchidananda, and the scum like maya. On account of maya Satchidananda is not seen. Though now and then one may get a glimpse of It, again maya covers It.'

This vision explains, by analogy, how the mind takes over and covers the Reality. Knowledge is a characteristic of the mind, but almost all knowledge is belief. Each mind has innumerable beliefs, and people live and die with them. Generally, old beliefs are replaced by new ones,

but some people like to retain the old ones and fight anything new. Beliefs are categorized as wrong, right, neutral, ridiculous, stupid, fanatical, and so on. This can be noticed by reading the contents and comments posted on any topic on the Internet. Beliefs are also considered as surmise, suspicion, opinion, and conviction. Beliefs rise from perception and memory along with external factors such as culture, values, duties, education, race, religion, and so on. Moreover, the three *gunas* of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* define the mind as well as the quality of beliefs. The Bhagavadgita says: 'O Partha, that intellect is born of *tamas* which, being covered by darkness, considers vice as virtue, and verily perceives all things contrary to what they are.'

Scientists also have beliefs, but science as a discipline is constantly questioning old beliefs and coming up with new answers, which can again be modified through further research. Scientists say: 'Knowing means nothing; testing that knowledge is everything.' In daily life most minds access a shorthand summary of things instead of the whole data lying behind. This automatic response saves time and energy but can and does give rise to stunted beliefs, which are most of the times layered with imagination, half-knowledge, and confabulation. This power of beliefs is also subject to causality, as Swami Vivekananda shows: 'A series of phenomena becomes associated with things in our mind in a sort of invariable order, so that whatever we perceive at any time is immediately referred to other facts in the mind.' Thus one idea gives

rise to a multitude of ideas, and we are forced to think accordingly.


When we see a beautiful flower, but with higher understanding, we can mentally see the inner structure, its processes, and the very materials of the flower. This is more liberating. Such mental liberation brings integrity and power to the mind. This is a *sattvic* mind. There was a time when the earth was considered young, flat, and at the centre of the universe. This was replaced by the higher liberating knowledge that the earth is very ancient, round, and is a tiny planet in one of billions of galaxies. Of course, there are people who use scientific data and come up with weird conclusions based on imagination, superstitions, language, inhibitions, likes, and dislikes. Many humans take this parallel journey that leads to nowhere. In their case the 'scum' lies thick and unmoving.

Intuition and inspiration also rise from the mind, giving place to higher knowledge. This is the essential creative side of the human mind, and it manifests in scientific thinking, problem solving, mathematics, and technology. This creative aspect of the mind is the engine that drives society and creates wealth through inventions, industries, and economies. It also gives rise to rational, logical, and scientific curiosity and is the cutting edge or the outer limits of the mind. The ordinary mind, weighed down by old beliefs, cocoons a person in the inner layers of the mind, the subconscious unthinking part. Wrong beliefs have to be broken, not pushed to other minds like we are ready to do. Religious beliefs, because of their hold on the mind, have to engage with new knowledge and not morph into an archaic system of morality, mythology, mystery, and incorrectness. In this case religion also must become free by replacing old beliefs with rational ones. Religion will then become modern and experiential and will bring great

good to humankind. Sri Ramakrishna taught 'so long as I live, so long do I learn' and pressed us to 'go forward'.

To come back to the main theme, the mind has the tendency to cover the Reality and distort it. This tendency in Vedanta is called *avarana*, covering, and *vikshepa*, projecting. And this occurs due to *avidya*, ignorance. Therefore, Vedanta says, we cannot know the Reality through the mind. That is, not through a mind dirtied and uncontrolled by beliefs, but the Reality can be known through the pure mind, for the pure mind and the Reality are one. The Reality, like the water of Satchidananda, is within us, and we have covered it with innumerable beliefs, which are like the 'scum' on the water.

One of the principal tenets of the Vedantic sadhana is *manana*, cogitation. It is using one's intellect to discern by employing the methods of logic, observation, and reasoning to arrive at a conclusion about the Reality. When all doubts, contrary beliefs, and illusions are eradicated one then meditates on it. It is not simply gulping down data unthinkingly. Sri Ramakrishna did not appreciate unthinking people. He once said: 'I can judge a man by his stick and umbrella. They must belong to that man who was here some time ago and swallowed a lot of my words without understanding them.' He was always happy when Swamiji used to test him and his words. People glibly and wrongly believe that one has to take religion and supersensuous thoughts on the basis of faith. Religion is a science, and scientific methods are used to clear the 'scum' that covers and hides the Reality.

This Reality is not different from our souls. All our struggles through millions of years of evolution were leading us to realize this Truth. And when it happens the *Narada Bhakti Sutra* says: 'The fathers (ancestors) rejoice, the devas dance in joy, and this earth gets a saviour.' 

Vivekananda's Impact on the World of Ideas

Dr Satish K Kapoor

IDEAS TRAVEL faster than light and keep orbiting in the astral realm till they find a suitable neural receiver to grow and develop. These ideas do not rest and anyone can crystallize them. Vivekananda's powerful ideas continue to impact humanity and will do so in the future. Like matter that cannot be destroyed but can only be transformed, powerful ideas too do not die. The prophets live even after their physical death because they are spiritually alive and have a strong identification with the message they have to deliver. Truth never grows old and what the puissant souls speak is nothing but the truth. Vivekananda regarded truth as a 'corrosive substance of infinite power,' which 'burns its way in wherever it falls—in soft substance at once, hard granite slowly, but it must.'¹

Vivekananda, the Prophet

A prophet is 'one who speaks out'.² Vivekananda spoke from the higher ranges of the mind and through direct perception could see the coming world problems, which if left unchecked could prove to be dangerous for humanity. In the West he saw materialism and individualism at its worst—the worship of Shakti through sense gratification—in the East he saw poverty and ignorance masquerading as religion. The mission of resuscitating humanity was his divine calling. 'I know my mission in life, and no chauvinism about me,' he wrote to Alasinga; 'I belong as much to India as to the world, no humbug about that. ... What country has any special claim on me? Am I any nation's slave?'³

In what way did Vivekananda contribute to the world of ideas? He was not a philosopher in the formal sense—like Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Spinoza, Kierkegaard, or others—nor did he present his ideas through dissertations or peer-reviewed journals to establish his theories. Yet his influence on the world of thought is perceptible from 1893, when he first appeared at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago, and continues to this day, both in India and abroad. His inspiring and innovative ideas, loaded with the wisdom of ages and fully in tune with the times, entered deep into the psyche of his audiences, some of whom were well known in different walks of life.

A philosopher may be a genius and impact one's area of study even after leaving the mortal coil, but this influence seldom transcends the mind level. One may read Jacob Böhme (1575–1624) or Julien de La Mettrie (1709–51) with interest, but may not view them with worshipful eyes or take their words as scripture. On the other hand, the words of prophets touch the heart and command our respect naturally.

The mind of an intellectual person is ensconced in the past or the present, but the prophet is far ahead and transcends time. The genius may have 'the eye of intellect and the wing of thought',⁴ to borrow William G Simm's (1806–70) expression, but a prophet has tremendous insight. A genius may or may not adhere to truth, but the prophet can die for it. The genius can remain preferably in an idealistic world; the prophet has a mission to fulfil, so is ever on the move. The genius may or may not have the will

to do, but the prophet is goaded by the supreme Will to act. Geniuses sometime deviate from the path of virtue; prophets are virtue incarnate and show light to humankind. Geniuses are known to have suffered from melancholia or insanity—as in the case of Michelangelo (1475–1564) or Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872), among others—a fact validated by philosophers like Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) and psychiatrists like Cesaro Lombroso (1835–1909).⁵ Prophets, on the other hand, may have oversensitive nerves but they remain on the track of Being. The genius loves truth, but the prophet lives it. A genius may just influence a small section of society, but a prophet affects humanity during his lifetime and after. A prophet is a genius but a genius is not always a prophet. In the case of Vivekananda, he had the profundity of an intellectual, the innovativeness of a genius, the purity of a saint, the zeal of a reformer, and the vision of a prophet.

Vivekananda's thoughts cannot be seen in quantifiable terms, as these have pervaded all the domains of life—religion, philosophy, art, education, society, politics, and economics. This essay delineates the impact of some of his ideas as a social and religious thinker and philosopher, as a spiritual humanist, and as one who taught the art and science of living. His ideas are fresh and vibrant and work on the minds of people like an alchemical medium that transforms dross into gold. It is not essential that outpourings of the heart should be always consistent, but they present the truth without adulteration and contain the ardour of a divine soul. To quote Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950): 'And what was Vivekananda? A radiant glance from the eye of Shiva; but behind him is the divine gaze from which he came and Shiva himself and Brahma and Vishnu and OM—all exceeding.'⁶

Though systematization of thought is essential for pedagogy, it takes away the spirit of an

idea, which forms its substratum. Vivekananda did not put his thoughts in an ideological crucible—like theism, humanism, collectivism, positivism, or some other—because that which is concretized cannot take a form other than that of the crucible and loses its malleability. Vivekananda is not to be assessed by his tangible works alone, but by the impact of his invisible spirit, which pervades society to this day. Scholars have interpreted Vivekananda as per their mental makeup, as a cyclonic Hindu monk, a patriot, a paragon of Vedanta, an awakener of souls, a social reformer, a saviour of Hinduism, and so on. But this does not explain the vastness of his mind, the glory of his spirit, or the quantum of his contribution to humanity. To quote Sri Aurobindo again:

Vivekananda was a soul of puissance if ever there was one, a very lion among men, but the definite work he has left behind is quite incommensurate with our impression of his creative might and energy. We perceive his influence still working gigantically, we know not well how, we know not well where, in something that is not yet formed, something leonine, grand, intuitive, upheaving that has entered the soul of India and we say, 'Behold, Vivekananda still lives in the soul of his Mother and in the souls of her children' (17.332).

Many ideas first expressed by Vivekananda through his speeches and writings were developed by later Indian thinkers, some of whom impacted world thought and culture. Mahatma Gandhi's (1872–1950) concept of ends and means and of trusteeship, Sri Aurobindo's notion of freedom, education, and Integral Yoga, Jawaharlal Nehru's (1889–1964) belief in the fundamental unity of India, and Rabindranath Tagore's (1861–1941) vision of the universal man echo Vivekananda's ideas. The social and religious zeal of Sister Nivedita

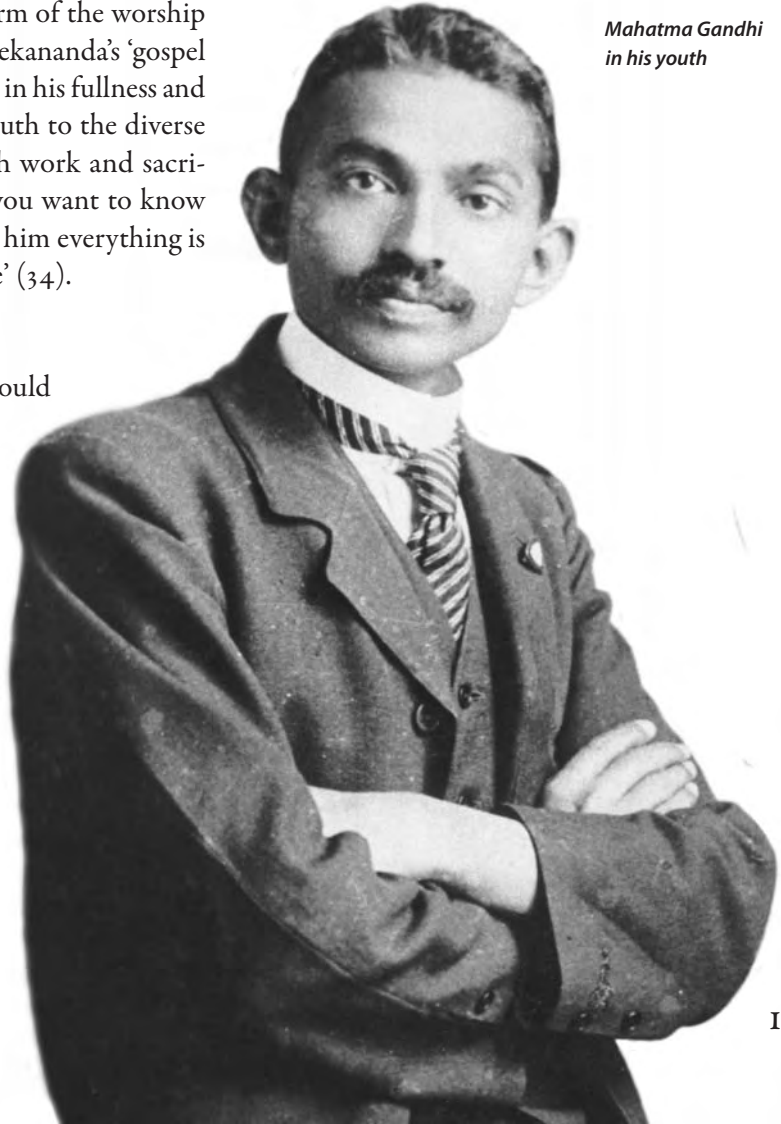
(1867–1911), the neo-Vedanta of Swami Ramatirtha (1873–1906), the patriotic fervour of Netaji Subhaschandra Bose (1897–1945), and many others were ignited by Vivekananda's writings. Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975) was deeply touched by Swamiji's defence of Hinduism. Some of Tagore's immortal lines—like 'if the world passes on in tears how could I sit alone pursuing my own salvation'—reflect the influence of Vivekananda.⁷ Another popular poem of Tagore says that God is not in 'chanting and singing and telling of beads' but is present 'where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path-maker is breaking stones,'⁸ comes close to Vivekananda's observation that 'devotion to duty is the highest form of the worship of God.'⁹ Tagore felt that Vivekananda's 'gospel marked the awakening of man in his fullness and that is why it inspired our youth to the diverse courses of liberation through work and sacrifice.'¹⁰ He suggested that 'if you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative' (34).

Vivekananda and Gandhi

The idea that good means should be employed to achieve the end, normally attributed to Mahatma Gandhi, originally came from Vivekananda, as can be seen from his lecture 'Work and Its Secret', delivered at Los Angeles, California, on 4 January 1900: 'One of the greatest lessons I have learnt in my life is to pay as much attention to the means of work as to its end. ... With the means all right, the end must come. We forget that it is the cause

that produces the effect. ... The means are the cause: attention to the means, therefore, is the secret of life.'¹¹

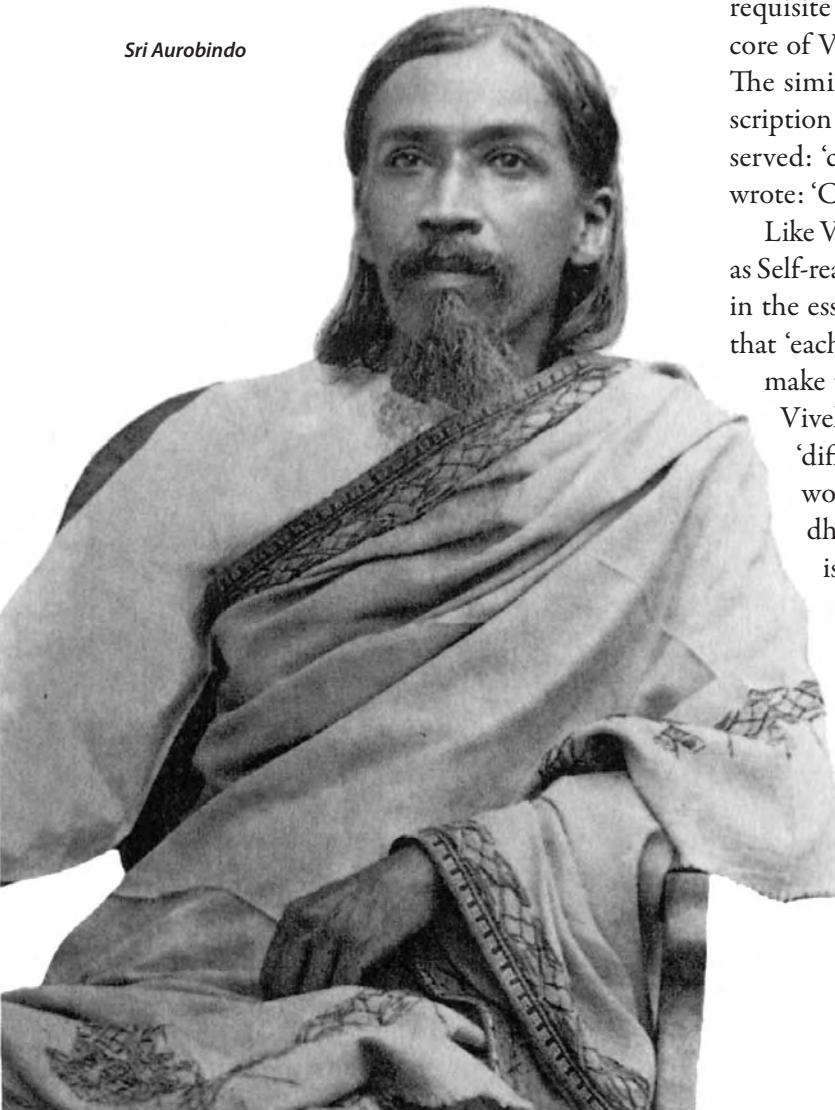
There is every possibility that Gandhi took a cue from Vivekananda's views on untouchability. His remark that Hinduism today consists 'merely in "eating" and "not eating"'¹² reminds one of Vivekananda's well-known observation that he made in reply to the 'Address of Welcome' at Manamadurai: 'Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is the cooking-pot.'¹³ Also these remarks of Swamiji are on the same line: 'The religion of India at present is "Don't-touchism"' (5.222). 'As long as *touch-me-not-ism* is your creed and the



*Mahatma Gandhi
in his youth*

kitchen-pot your deity, you cannot rise spiritually' (5.267). Vivekananda's advice was to 'kick such customs out!' He demanded: 'Unless the blood circulates over the whole body, has any country risen at any time?' (7.246). Compare this to Gandhi's observation: 'Hindus will certainly never deserve freedom nor get it, if they allow their noble religion to be disgraced by the retention of the taint of untouchability.'¹⁴ The term 'Don't-touchism' coined by Vivekananda continued to be used by social reformers and nationalists in the pre-independence period till the practice of untouchability was legally abolished by the Indian Constitution in 1950.

Sri Aurobindo



Long before Gandhi evolved his concept of trusteeship with an egalitarian perspective,¹⁵ Vivekananda had suggested that one should hold money 'as custodian for what is God's'.¹⁶ This is in accord with the *Isha Upanishad*: '*Ma gridha kasya svid dhanam*; do not covet the wealth of others.'¹⁷ Gandhi's ardent belief in ahimsa in thought, word, and deed—though derived from many sources—can also be traced to Vivekananda, who said: 'There is no virtue higher than non-injury. There is no happiness higher than what a man obtains by this attitude of non-offensiveness to all creation.'¹⁸ 'To injure another creates bondage and hides the truth' (7.68). Gandhi described fearlessness as the first requisite of spirituality, a point that forms the core of Vivekananda's concept of man-making. The similarity is further revealed in their description of cowardice. While Vivekananda observed: 'cowardice is no virtue' (5.86), Gandhi wrote: 'Cowardice is the greatest vice.'

Like Vivekananda, Gandhi described religion as Self-realization.¹⁹ Again, like him, he believed in the essential unity of all religions. His view that 'each religion has its own contribution to make to human evolution'²⁰ reminds one of Vivekananda, who said that all religions are 'different forces in the economy of God, working for the good of mankind'.²¹ Gandhi's observation that 'the soul of religions is one, but it is encased in a multitude of forms'²² seems to be a borrowing from Vivekananda, who wrote: 'Every religion has a soul behind it, and that soul may differ from the soul of another religion.'²³ A parallel can also be drawn between Gandhi's concept of education, which aimed at 'the development of the mind, body and soul',²⁴ with what Vivekananda observed: 'We want to become

harmonious beings, with the psychical, spiritual, intellectual, and working (active) sides of our nature equally developed.'²⁵ Gandhi's love and concern for the masses also reminds one of the great swami. But Gandhi went a step ahead, crystallizing his love into *sarvodaya*, welfare of all; patriotism into *svaraj*, self-rule; and ahimsa, non-violence, into satyagraha, call to truth.

Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo, the mystic philosopher, acknowledged the invisible influence of Vivekananda on him in one of his letters to Motilal Roy, sometime in 1913: 'Vivekananda in the Alipore Jail gave me the foundations of that knowledge which is the basis of our *Sadhana*.'²⁶ He believed that Vivekananda was an awakened soul, who had the 'supreme experience of the Self' as described in the Upanishads. He was convinced that Sri Ramakrishna wanted him to be 'a great power for changing the world-mind in a spiritual direction' (22.150). In *The Synthesis of Yoga* Sri Aurobindo quotes from Vivekananda's letter, in which Swamiji says that he has lost all wish for personal salvation and would like to be born again and again to take away the miseries of people. Vivekananda's yoga, he said, is not limited to the realization of the Transcendent by the individual soul, 'it embraces also the realization of the Universal—"the sum total of all souls"—and cannot therefore be confined to the movement of a personal salvation and escape. Even in his transcendence of cosmic limitations he is still one with all in God; a divine work remains for him in the universe' (20.257–58).

Sri Aurobindo noted that the philosophy of Vedanta and yoga have 'exceeded their Asiatic limit', and were impacting the life of people in America and Europe; 'the ideas have long been filtering into western thought by a hundred indirect channels' (3.344–5). He felt that the work

of the Theosophical Society and the appearance of Vivekananda at the World's Parliament of Religions had 'put the seal on Hindu revival' by rousing its self-assertive power vis-à-vis 'the materialized mentality of the occident' (14.14). Referring to the impact of Vivekananda in the context of a session of the Indian National Congress in London, Sri Aurobindo observed that Vivekananda's sojourn to the US, followed by the work of other swamis, did more for India than a hundred London Congresses could affect.²⁷

It is natural that Sri Aurobindo, who held Vivekananda in great esteem and recognized his 'divine work', should have been influenced by his ideas, consciously or unconsciously. His concept of freedom has its premise in Vivekananda's view that the whole universe, in its constant motion, represents the dominant quest for freedom: 'In freedom it rises, in freedom it rests, and into freedom it melts away' (2.125). His nationalism, like that of Vivekananda's, had a spiritual orientation, and his view of India as mother, as Bharata-Shakti, and not as a mere geographic expression, reminds one of Vivekananda's description of India as 'the blessed *Punya Bhumi*'—sacred land—'the land of introspection and of spirituality.'²⁸

Sri Aurobindo's view that each nation is a Shakti 'of the evolving spirit in humanity, and lives by the principle which it embodies'²⁹ is similar to that of Vivekananda, who wrote: 'In each nation, as in music, there is a main note, a central theme, upon which all others turn.'³⁰ Both evinced interest in India's rehabilitation from a subject state, so that the country could fulfil its natural destiny of being the world leader in spirituality. Both provided a spiritual foundation to the concept of the unity of humankind and stressed on the deeper dimensions of life. Both relied on reasoning, thought, and intuition to explore the world of knowledge.

There is a clear imprint of Vivekananda on Sri Aurobindo's concept of Integral Yoga, which aims at awakening in humans 'the dynamic divine potential' through concentration of mind, and other techniques. 'By this Yoga we not only seek the Infinite, but we call upon the Infinite to unfold himself in human life,' wrote Sri Aurobindo.³¹ Basing his views on Vivekananda, whom he quotes in this context, he argues that 'the perfection of the Integral Yoga will come when each man is able to follow his own path of Yoga, pursuing the development of his own nature in its upsurging towards that which transcends the nature. For freedom is the final law and the last consummation' (20.51). Compare this sentence with Vivekananda's observation: 'Infinite divided by infinite, added to infinite, multiplied by infinite (remains) infinite. You are infinite. ... The infinite can never be made finite. You are never bound.'³²

Sri Aurobindo's educational ideas were also influenced by Vivekananda. In *The Hour of God and other Writings* he says: 'The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task-master; he is a helper and a guide.'³³ Compare this to what Vivekananda said: 'The teacher spoils everything by thinking that he is teaching. ... Within man is all knowledge ... and it requires only an awakening, and that much is the work of a teacher.'³⁴ Again, like Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo disapproved of the concept of hammering the child into shape as desired by many parents or teachers. His view that education should help 'the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use,'³⁵ reminds one of Vivekananda who observed: 'Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man.'³⁶

Vivekananda and Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, was impressed by Vivekananda's breadth of

vision, universal outlook, concern for the masses, and intense patriotism. He wrote in his *Prison Diary* on Sunday, 10 March 1935 that he had read Vivekananda's *Jnana Yoga* lectures in Europe 'and should like to read more of him.'³⁷ In a letter to his daughter, Indu, later Indira Gandhi, from prison, dated 17 February 1945, he acknowledged the receipt of three books of Swami Vivekananda, *Lectures from Colombo to Almora*, *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, and *Karma Yoga* and thanked her for the same.³⁸ In a subsequent letter dated 19 April 1945 he asked her to procure Romain Rolland's books on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, although he was not sure whether these were two separate books or one. He further wrote that if they were not available in the library, Upadhyaya should be asked to obtain it from elsewhere. Specifying the search, he mentioned that the Indian edition had been published by the Ramakrishna Centre near Almora, 'the Advaita Ashrama in Mayavati' (13,609). In another letter to Indu, dated 27 April 1945, he educated her about the achievements of Vivekananda in about 200 words. He described him as 'a remarkable and fascinating man with enormous energy and a fire and passion which drove him on and eventually consumed him when he was barely forty' (13,614). Jawaharlal Nehru found Vivekananda's lectures and letters to be 'of topical interest' even after five decades. He referred to his conversation with Halide Edib, a Turkish writer, who had been deeply impressed by Vivekananda's presence when he visited her school in Constantinople (ibid.). Till the end of April 1945 Jawaharlal Nehru had not studied Romain Rolland's books, as is evident from his letter dated 1 May 1945, in which he expressed the desire to read his works in original French. Finally, he received them in prison on 24 May 1945 (13,626).

In *The Discovery of India* Jawaharlal Nehru praises Vivekananda by describing him as 'a kind

of bridge between the past of India and her present.³⁹ He profusely quotes from *Lectures from Colombo to Almora* (1933) and *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (1942), both published by the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, to explain his ideas on yoga, Vedanta, religion, nationalism, internationalism, contemporary society, and other subjects. After quoting Albert Einstein that 'the serious scientific workers are the only profoundly religious people' in this materialistic age, he adds in the footnote: 'Fifty years ago, Vivekananda regarded modern science as a manifestation of the real religious spirit, for it sought to understand truth by sincere effort' (558).

Jawaharlal Nehru's idea of the fundamental unity of India bears the imprint of Vivekananda's views. From the tone of his writing, it appears that he appreciated Vivekananda's gospel of strength and fearlessness, his crusading zeal for the service of humanity, his condemnation of the futile metaphysical discussions and the 'touch-me-not-ism' of upper castes, and his stress on freedom and equality (337-9).

(To be continued)

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Vivekananda's Thoughts on Society

Dr Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA dedicated his life to the uplift of humankind. He employed his tremendous spiritual power, accumulated during his intense sadhanas, to help people both in India and abroad. It was Sri Ramakrishna who before his *mahasamadhi* dedicated and empowered Swamiji to this task. Like his Master, Swamiji never hesitated in offering his time and attention even to the most insignificant person. Sri Ramakrishna was an ascetic but not in the traditional sense of the term, for he was also a householder. He showed people how to live in the world while holding on to God. Swamiji carried this message to the people by showing that human life and society had to be based on spirituality and not on materialism.

Notwithstanding his immense love for humanity, Swamiji frequently pointed out our drawbacks, especially when we chose to discard egalitarianism for exclusivity and selfishness. He was even more scathing in his criticism of human negativity and weaknesses, which hurt him most. His criticism was to make people exert themselves to create better individuals and societies.

Rationality and Equality

Swamiji was very objective and rational in his analysis of society. It was his rationality and objectivity that made him progressive. It enabled him to distil out some great traditions from the mass of superstitions that were smothering India. He showed people that all the noble ideas that were timeless and universal in character should prevail over ordinary and relative ideas of morality and duty. This would unshackle society and make it move forward. Swamiji went as far as to criticize some aspects of the *Smritis* as being outdated and irrational, while he presented, in keeping with the times, new thoughts with a scientific bend. Ordinary teachers would have invited derision by such actions, but he was a world teacher with the power and authority to do so.

Swamiji was a great votary of equality. His concept of equality, however, must be understood in a larger philosophical context and not in a utopian or fanciful way. There is inequality in nature and society, but there also exists an underlying commonality. Disturb a body of water and the water struggles to return to equilibrium; similarly, all social struggles are directed to attain

equality. This struggle runs through all spheres of the individual and collective life. Swamiji even showed that creation itself is disturbed equilibrium. Thus, struggle against inequality is a great motivating factor for different social activities. Such objective and practical interpretation of metaphysics is very rare among religious leaders or reformers, who generally denounce inequality as an unwarranted phenomenon. Science also says that when equilibrium is reached, there is no change and all activities stop. Creation starts anew only when the equilibrium is again disturbed. Since the universe is vast, it takes a long time for it to again arrive at its original state.

But Swamiji's explanation of inequality acting as a catalyst for social change does not mean that he did not show at what level real equality exists. If equality never existed, where did its concept arrive from and how is it ingrained in everyone? Swamiji showed that all struggles against inequality would lead people to the reality called the Atman, which is the same in all beings.

Society by its very nature is unequal, because it is a simple division of labour. As society progresses and becomes complex; different professions or works rise, which in turn create social divisions. This is more obvious in modern societies, where social divisions are multiplying due to the increasing number of professions and skills. In ancient India the varna system, four castes, was held responsible for inequality in society. This division was made on the basis of aptitude and profession, but later it turned hereditary and watertight. Swamiji categorically said: 'It [caste] was a trade guild and not a religious institution.'¹ He even said that the caste system was only an outgrowth of the political institutions of India. He declared that caste was a 'social institution' (5.198).

The four caste divisions were broad classifications, but even in ancient days there were

many sub-castes among the main four groups. As society progresses many professions open up, and people rise to fill into these work categories creating a caste. Thus there has always been an upward movement of all its members. Swamiji showed that future societies would have much more professions and activities, and hence people would rise and make society advance. He derided the idea of static castes and their allied customs as archaic and useless in present days. He opened to every member of society the door to individual and social progress and inspired them to work hard.

Stress on Education

Swamiji knew well that culture and education were the two tools that transform society. He asked people at the lowest levels of society to come up on their own strength, not by violence and fanaticism but through education and culture. He understood that only education could bring about right social changes. Therefore, the privilege of having education, which was confined to the higher echelons of society, had to be made available to the masses as well. Today Swamiji's dream of a universal education is gradually taking form. This is the surest and best method of an all-round social development. He said: 'The elements of progress were always actively present in India. As soon as a peaceful government was there, these have always shown themselves' (ibid.).

Though Swamiji stressed universal and higher education, his concept of education was not about filling people's brains only with facts but to enable them to think. He said that the ideal of education was one that helped achieve mastery over one's mind. Therefore, the goal of all education is the attainment of self-control and the realization of the great Upanishadic saying: '*Tat tvam asi*; you are That.' How relevant

this concept is can be gauged from the fact that there is so much intransigence among 'educated' people, who do not hesitate to harm others for petty self-interests, not to speak of ill-treating the less qualified. This lack of discipline and ethics has created havoc in modern societies.

Swamiji said that intellectual education alone was not sufficient, as it did not take care of the heart and made people selfish. He was very critical of heartless intellectual people and appreciated the person of heart. He said: 'When there is conflict between the heart and the brain, let the heart be followed' (1.412). Ironically, the ground of Swamiji's dissatisfaction has not disappeared; on the contrary, criminal offences perpetrated by educated people are more frequent today.

Swamiji also advocated education for women. This was revolutionary during his time, when very few women were educated. He stressed that they had to be educated and allowed to take decisions independently. He understood very well that education and social decision-making were interrelated. He referred to the sage Manu, who enjoined: 'Daughters should be supported and educated with as much care and attention as the sons' (5.26). He appreciated modern society for not following the scriptures dealing with old social codes that recommended child-marriage. He also said that there was no difference between men and women in the highest Reality.

Householders

Swamiji thought about all sections of society, but particularly about the householders. Householders are society's mainstay. He never denounced the householder life in order to highlight the life of renunciation. For him every one was great in one's own place. Each should follow one's own duty. In *Karma Yoga* he spoke at length on the role of parents, children, and everything related to the home. He

mainly stressed that unselfishness, chastity, and purity must be practised by householders too. Moreover, he instructed them to always speak the truth, as he knew that falsehood was at the root of all the corruptions of society.

Swamiji had a distinct opinion about the institution of marriage. He said that the institution of marriage was a true form of renunciation: 'The formation of society, the institution of marriage, the love for children, our good works, morality, and ethics are all different forms of renunciation' (6.378). This is a new interpretation of family life for modern society, although it is somehow embedded in the teachings of the Upanishads and the Puranas.


Swamiji also highlighted the sanctity of marriage as an important part of the growth of civilization: 'So long as you live in society your marriage certainly affects every member of it; and therefore society has the right to dictate whom you shall marry, and whom you shall not' (3.408). We must remember that Swamiji's ideas on marriage are to make society fit to realize the highest truths of religion. He said: 'If a man or a woman were allowed the freedom to take up any woman or man as wife or husband, if individual pleasure, satisfaction of animal instincts, were to be allowed to run loose in society, the result must be evil, evil children, wicked and demonical. Ay, man in every country is, on the one hand, producing these brutal children, and on the other hand multiplying the police force to keep these brutes down' (ibid.).

Swamiji spoke highly of the status of women in Indian society. In India the woman is mother: 'In India the mother is the centre of the family and our highest ideal. She is to us the representative of God, as God is the mother of the Universe' (2.506). At the same time, he was quick to point out that: 'The Mohammedan woman differs vastly from her western sisters in so far as her social and intellectual development

is not so pronounced. But do not, on that account, think that the Mohammedan woman is unhappy, because it is not so' (ibid.). He declared proudly that the ideal for women is Sita, Savitri, and Damayanti, who were the embodiments of purity.

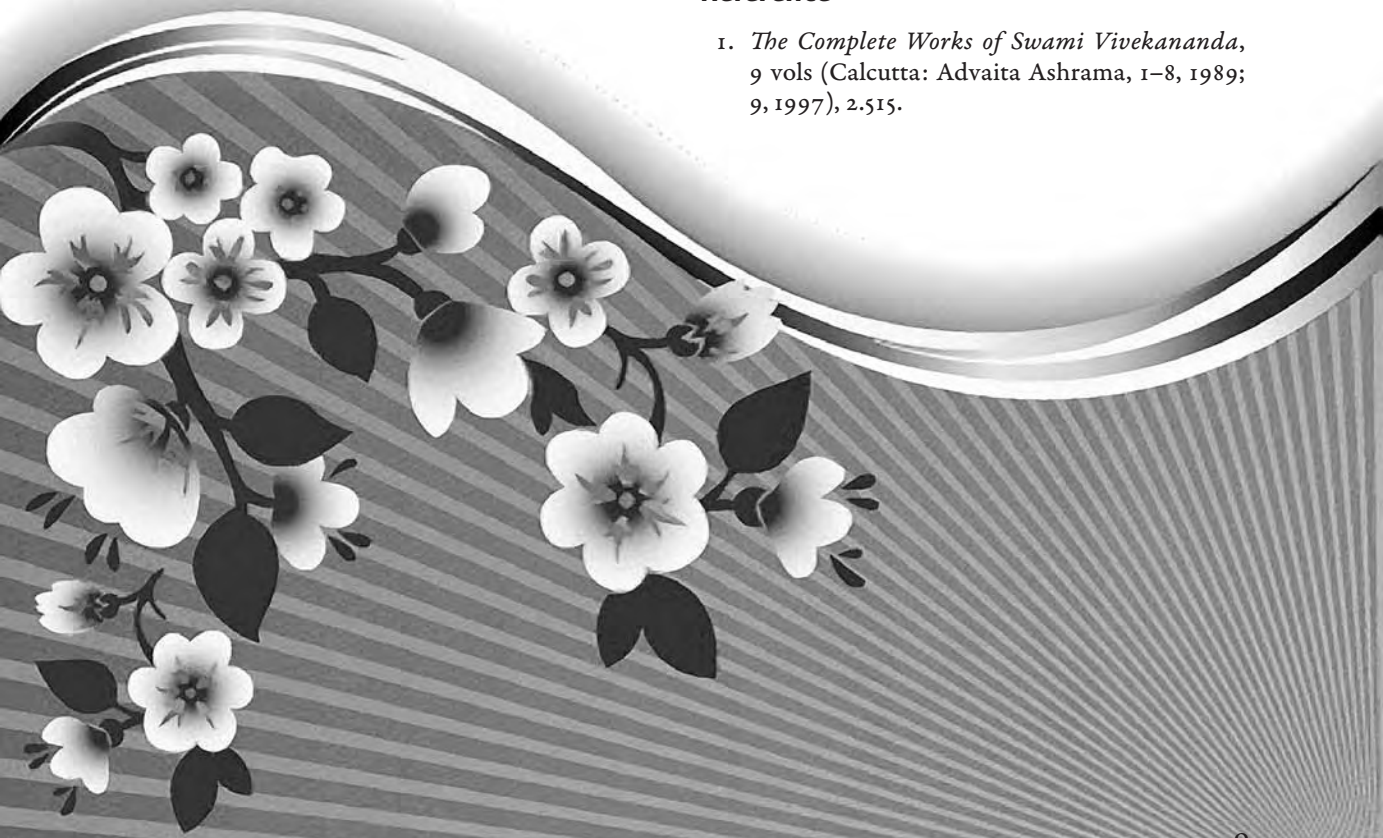
Religious and Social Freedom

Swamiji was a religious preacher convinced that the faith of each person should not be interfered with. Religious freedom in India is what helped grow religion in all its diverse aspects. On the other hand, Indian society became stunted due to many sectarian and dogmatic social rules and regulations. Swamiji wanted the social chains of India to be removed so that society could grow. For the West he wanted the chains of religious bigotry to be removed.

These religious conflicts and repressions have been like stumbling blocks to the development of humankind for the last thousand years. Swamiji wanted each society to preserve its own ideal and at the same time expand to incorporate the best of other societies' ideals. This would create a better world civilization. Materialism has to be present in order to bring the fruits of education and technology to all people, but the proliferation of materialism has always to be counteracted with spirituality. The ideal of a person is not to create a perfect society, which is impossible, but to go beyond society. Sri Ramakrishna stressed that the goal of human life is to realize God. Society was to be made a conflict-free training ground to cultivate spirituality, like an ashrama, in order that everyone can realize God. 

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Spiritual Values for the Youth

Prof. Vijaya Kumar Murty

YOUTH IS THAT PERIOD of life when we are full of excitement, optimism, and ebullience about the adventures awaiting for us. During that period one has abundant energy in the body and the mind, and that energy is reflected in one's idealism, daring attitude, and hope in life. For this reason Swami Vivekananda's message finds its greatest resonance in the youth.

Normally, values refer to certain principles we hold dear and that reflect our humanity and culture. Knowingly or unknowingly, values help us guide and shape our perspectives, views, and actions in relation to ourselves and the world. The adjective 'spiritual' implies those values that are related to deeper outlooks and principles. Given this definition, it is hard to find anything in Swamiji's message that is not connected to spiritual values!

Core Spiritual Values

Among the spiritual principles that Swamiji proclaims, two are fundamental: the divinity of the soul and the oneness of existence. These principles can, of course, be traced to the Vedas. The divinity of the soul is captured in this Upanishadic dictum: '*Tat tvam asi*; you are That.'¹ The oneness of existence is synthesized in the expression: '*Sarvam khalvidam brahma*; all this is Brahman' (3.14.1).

However, Swamiji cast these teachings in such a way that their importance and relevance to young people becomes more evident. We live in an age dominated by an empirical approach to truth, social service as the foundation of virtue,

and the need for individuals to have freedom and opportunity to express themselves and pursue their goals. Swamiji presents spiritual values that not only include these priorities but even transcend them.

Firstly, he teaches that not having faith in oneself is called atheism. Secondly, he teaches that the oneness of existence has a social implication demanding our working for the welfare of all beings. While acknowledging the right of the individuals to pursue their ideals and aspirations, he also emphasized the responsibility of the individuals to see that others also are free to exercise those rights. Moreover, he made it clear that these two are not unrelated, and that it is in working for the well-being of the world that our own well-being is secured. Thirdly, he teaches that the criterion for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of a discipline is that out of its practice there should come strength—physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual—and that our strength can only be actualized when we work for strengthening every member of society at all levels.

Swamiji expresses these principles in the lingua franca of the day, English, and in a style more familiar to modern audiences. He emphasizes that principles should be understood in conjunction with a method to translate them into action, and he does this through a masterly exposition of yoga in its varied forms. We should not underestimate the significance of this contribution, as he takes the abstruse concepts of philosophy and shows how to translate them into action.

Divinity of the Soul

In explaining the ideal of Vedanta, Swamiji says: 'In one word, this ideal is that you are divine, "Thou art That". This is the essence of Vedanta; after all its ramifications and intellectual gymnastics, you know the human soul to be pure and omniscient.'² But he follows this principle with a unique twist that shows its immediate applicability in the field of action and in determining the direction and course of our lives: 'All such ideas as that we can do this or cannot do that are superstitions. We can do everything. The Vedanta teaches men to have faith in themselves first. As certain religions of the world say that a man who does not believe in a Personal God outside of himself is an atheist, so the Vedanta says, a man who does not believe in himself is an atheist. Not believing in the glory of our own soul is what the Vedanta calls atheism' (ibid.).

We often observe how those who are in the pride of their youth have an abundance of self-confidence and feel that they have no need for God. Their view is that God is a crutch used by people who are unable or unwilling to strive for their goals through their own capabilities. They feel that such people appeal to God for help to intercede in their worldly affairs because of their weakness and inability. And as they feel no lack of ability or strength, they think they have no need for God. However, Swamiji is able to introduce to such people a new concept of God: one that does not deny but rather extols their self-reliance and self-confidence.

Thus Swamiji takes people from where they are and gives them a new perspective on themselves and on life in general. He says: 'Each of us is heir-apparent to the Emperor of emperors; we are of the substance of God Himself. Nay, according to the Advaita, we are God Himself though we have forgotten our own nature in thinking of ourselves as little men' (3.160).

Oneness of Existence

From the first principle, that of the inner divinity, Swamiji deduces some interpersonal and social consequences. We have forgotten our divine nature and 'thus made differences—I am a little better than you, or you than I, and so on' (ibid.). In other words, social differentiation and fragmentation is a result of this ignorance. The contrary is the idea of social unity and oneness of existence. Swamiji says: 'This idea of oneness is the great lesson India has to give, and mark you, when this is understood, it changes the whole aspect of things, because you look at the world through other eyes than you have been doing before. And this world is no more a battlefield where each soul is born to struggle with every other soul and the strongest gets the victory and the weakest goes to death' (ibid.).

But why are we not aware of it? Even when we think that we have understood the principle intellectually, why are we not able to put it into practice, in our actions and in our thoughts? Swamiji's answer is striking. He does not refer to philosophy or metaphysics, he does not speak explicitly of ignorance or maya, he instead gives a very concrete cause: weaknesses at all levels, from the physical to the intellectual. He addresses this particular message with special force when speaking to young people: 'We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it. First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you' (3.242).

And to further emphasize his point, he takes a radical departure from conventional thought:

You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. These are

bold words; but I have to say them, for I love you. I know where the shoe pinches. I have gained a little experience. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little of strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men (ibid.).

Swamiji insists on the importance of cultivating strength in all the aspects of our personality:

Strength, strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page. This is the one great thing to remember, it has been the one great lesson I have been taught in my life; strength, it says, strength, O man, be not weak. Are there no human weaknesses?—says man. There are, say the Upanishads, but will more weakness heal them, would you try to wash dirt with dirt? Will sin cure sin, weakness cure weakness? Strength, O man, strength, say the Upanishads, stand up and be strong. Ay, it is the only literature in the world where you find the word 'Abhih', 'fearless', used again and again; in no other scripture in the world is this adjective applied either to God or to man. Abhih, fearless! (3.237).

What young person, restless to make his or her mark in the world, will not be fired up and enthused by such words? The same people who might have rebelled at the thought of anything religious or spiritual are, after being in contact with these words, ready to embrace those ideals. Swamiji continues:

This is the one great truth India has to teach to the world, because it is nowhere else. This is spirituality, the science of the soul. What makes a man stand up and work? Strength. Strength is goodness, weakness is sin. If there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the

Upanishads, bursting like a bomb-shell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word fearlessness. And the only religion that ought to be taught is the religion of *fearlessness*. Either in this world or in the world of religion, it is true that fear is the sure cause of degradation and sin. It is fear that brings misery, fear that brings death, fear that breeds evil. And what causes fear? Ignorance of our own nature' (3.160).

And he reiterates that strength should be the criterion to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of our spiritual disciplines:

This is the one question I put to every man, woman, or child, when they are in physical, mental, or spiritual training. Are you strong? Do you feel strength?—for I know it is truth alone that gives strength. I know that truth alone gives life, and nothing but going towards reality will make us strong, and none will reach truth until he is strong. Every system, therefore, which weakens the mind, makes one superstitious, makes one mope, makes one desire all sorts of wild impossibilities, mysteries, and superstitions, I do not like, because its effect is dangerous. Such systems never bring any good; such things create morbidity in the mind, make it weak, so weak that in course of time it will be almost impossible to receive truth or live up to it (2.201).

The strength that Swamiji refers to is a combination of the principles of the divinity of the soul and the oneness of existence. There should be strength for all; therefore, while we cultivate strength in ourselves, we should try to bring out the strength of every member of society. Faith in oneself and the realization of strength in oneself necessarily implies faith in all, the dedication of one's strength and ability to help everyone realize their individual potential. To the people assembled at the famous Shiva temple at Rameswaram, Swamiji said:

(Continued on page 199)

Divine Blessings from a Divine Being

A P N Pankaj

Be possessed of Shraddha (faith), of Virya (courage), attain to the knowledge of the Atman and sacrifice your life for the good of others—this is my wish and blessings.¹

THIS IS HOW Swami Vivekananda, about a week before he left his mortal frame, blessed one of his disciples, Sharatchandra Chakravarty. It was evening, the guru and the disciple had been conversing for some time, and as the disciple prostrated at Swamiji's feet and sought his blessings, Swamiji placed his hand on his head saying: 'If my blessings be of any good to you, I say—may Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna give you his grace. I know of no blessings higher than this' (7.268).

There is a Hindi couplet that says: '*Jyon kele ke pat mein, pat pat mein pat, tyon santo ki bat mein, bat bat mein bat*'; just as there is another layer beneath each layer of a plantain tree, so are there several layers of meanings behind the statement of a saint.' The intention of this article is to bring out from the above quoted words of Swamiji some of those 'layers of meanings'.

Shraddha, Virya, Atmajnana

The terms *shraddha*, *virya*, and *atmajnana*, knowledge of the Atman, are, in the present context, interrelated and carry deep connotations. Although these terms occur frequently in spiritual parlance, they require elucidation in some detail.

What kind of faith is sought to be conveyed through the word *shraddha*? It is that faith without which no action is of any consequence. Sri

Krishna says in the Bhagavadgita: 'Whatever is sacrificed, given, or performed and whatever austerity is practised without *shraddha*, it is called *asat* (unreal), O Partha; it is of no use here or hereafter.'² Sri Krishna also says that it is only through *shraddha* that one attains to jnana (4.39) and declares: 'And of all the yogis, he who with the inner self merged in Me, with *shraddha* devotes himself to Me, is considered by Me the most steadfast' (6.47).

In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* the seer, in his last teaching to the departing pupils, says: '*Shraddhayadeyam ashraddhaya'deyam*; an offering should be made with honour, an offering should not be made with dishonour.'³ 'By faith is Agni kindled, through faith is oblation offered up.'⁴ Paying obeisance to Parvati and Shiva, Tulasidas says: '*Bhavanishankarau vande shraddhavisvasarupinau, yabhyam vina napashyanti siddhah svantahsthamishvaram*; I salute Parvati and Shiva who are embodiments of reverence and faith, without which sages cannot see the Lord residing in them.'⁵ And Tulasidas goes on saying that just as it is not possible for one to find order without the element of earth, so also none can attain to dharma without *shraddha*: '*Shraddha bina dharma nahin hoi, binu mahi gandhe ki pavai koi*; there can be no piety without faith, can there be any smell other than from earth?' (7.90.2).

Shraddha is defined by Acharya Shankara as follows: 'Acceptance, by firm judgement, as true of what the scriptures and the guru instruct is called by the sages *shraddha*, by means of which the Reality is perceived.'⁶

Therefore, when Swamiji blesses his disciple, the first thing he speaks of is shraddha. And without it time spent in japa, meditation, rituals, and charity are all reduced to mechanical actions. Any act performed with shraddha is vested with a power that opens the most inaccessible realms of spirituality. Shraddha lends the individual enormous self-confidence. One is made according to one's faith, declares Sri Krishna.⁷ Swamiji used to emphasize the need of faith in ourselves. And for one who has faith in oneself, it is relatively easier to have faith in God, the guru, and the scriptures.

Swamiji next blesses Sharatchandra to be *virya*van, courageous. *Virya* also means 'vigour' or 'power'. The word is the abstract noun of *vira*, hero. And Swamiji has always harped on fearlessness as an antidote for all individual and social ills. He said that what he preached was the message of the Upanishads, and that the one cardinal message of the Upanishads is *abhih*, fearlessness. The *Mundaka Upanishad* declares that 'this Atman cannot be attained by the one devoid of strength.'⁸ Shankara, in his commentary on this mantra, defines *balabinena* as 'bereft of the vigour generated by constant adherence to the Self'. By blessing Sharatchandra to be *virya*van Swamiji wishes that he may be possessed of not only physical strength or mental courage, but also of the power of the spirit.

There is a connection between *shraddha* and *virya*. Only a *vira* can have true *shraddha*, and only a *shraddhavan* can be a real hero. It is only by integrating these two qualities that emerges a real evolved person. Swamiji brings these two together in his blessings to show the path to attain the next one: *atmajnana*.

Sri Krishna says: 'Even if you be the worst sinner among all sinners, still you will cross over all the wickedness with the raft of knowledge alone. O Arjuna, as a blazing fire reduces pieces

of wood to ashes, similarly the fire of knowledge reduces all actions to ashes.'⁹ This is the power of *atmajnana*, by which 'the knot of the heart gets untied, all doubts are dispelled, and all actions become dissipated.'¹⁰ Tulasidas affirms that action with attachment to fruit can no longer be possible once a person attains *atmajnana*: '*Karm ki hohin svarupahi chinhen*; can one continue to perform actions (with attachment) even after attaining Self-realization.'¹¹

And Shankara boldly declares: 'Let people quote the scriptures and sacrifice to the gods, let them perform rituals and worship the deities, but there is no liberation without the realization of one's identity with the Atman; no, not even in the lifetime of a hundred Brahmas put together.'¹²

Atmajnana is not a subject of academic or intellectual interest alone; one has to experience the unity of the Atman and Brahman directly, 'like a myrobalan in one's palm'—*hastamalaka-vat*. To attain such *aparokshanubhava*, immediate experience, an intense burning urge is required. It is also necessary to seek refuge with a competent guru.

Atmajnana is the culmination of the entire journey that a human being has been experiencing for thousands of births. Through these lives of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, affluence and indigence, intelligence and ignorance, hope and despair—through all these transient experiences, when one sees 'the evil in birth, death, old age, diseases, and miseries',¹³ then an intense urge for liberation arises and takes one to the feet of the guru.

What blessing greater than this can a guru give to a disciple? Swamiji encourages Sharatchandra to attain *atmajnana*. But he does not stop there, because for Swamiji Sri Ramakrishna has still a greater role after *atmajnana*. A blessing greater than the attainment of *atmajnana*?

Yes. Even after arriving at the highest spiritual state, Swamiji was to live in this world to serve humankind. Sri Ramakrishna once reprimanded Swamiji, then Narendranath, on knowing that he wanted to remain immersed in samadhi: 'Shame on you! You are seeking such an insignificant thing. There is a state higher than that even. ... I thought you would be, like a banyan, sheltering thousands from the scorching misery of the world.'¹⁴ In line with the same ordinance comes the next blessing of Swamiji to Sharatchandra: 'Sacrifice your life for the good of others.'

Self-sacrifice

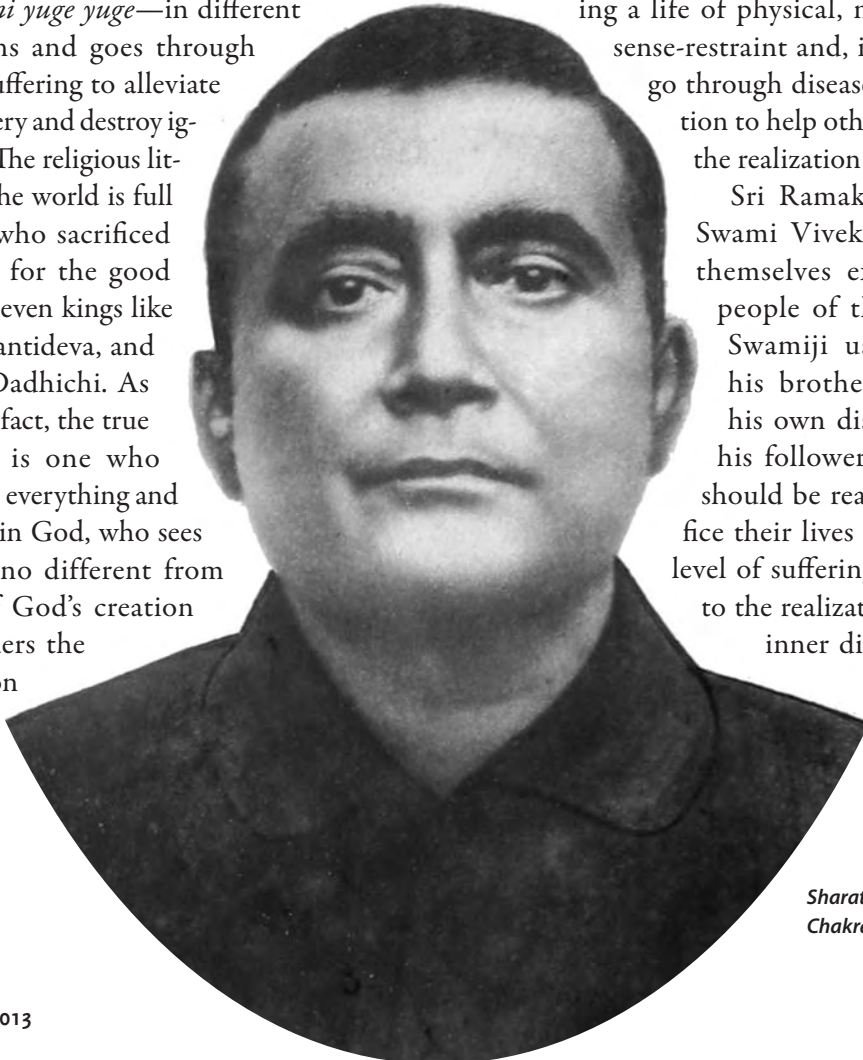
God declares that he is born in every age—*sambhavami yuge yuge*—in different incarnations and goes through pain and suffering to alleviate human misery and destroy ignorance.¹⁵ The religious literature of the world is full of people who sacrificed themselves for the good of others—even kings like Sibi and Rantideva, and seers like Dadhichi. As a matter of fact, the true *atmajnani* is one who sees God in everything and everything in God, who sees oneself as no different from the rest of God's creation and considers the amelioration

of the plight of others as a help to oneself. There is no more 'otherness' for a person who can serve the poor, the destitute, the ignorant, and the sick considering them as members of his or her immediate family.

Spreading the knowledge of the Self is also a consequence of feeling oneness with all, for in the final analysis ignorance about one's real nature, ignorance of the Self, is the greatest misery. Spreading a high spiritual message through one's life, by setting a personal example, and through interaction with people is considered the highest duty for one who has experienced the essential oneness of the whole creation.

Such a person can work untiringly, accepting a life of physical, mental, and sense-restraint and, if necessary, go through disease and affliction to help others attain to the realization of the Self.

Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are themselves examples of people of that calibre. Swamiji used to tell his brother disciples, his own disciples, and his followers that they should be ready to sacrifice their lives to raise the level of suffering humanity to the realization of their inner divinity. And together



Sharatchandra
Chakravarty

with this he also inculcated in us the understanding of the basic needs of life, before preaching any high ideal: 'In all India there are, say, a hundred thousand really spiritual men and women. Now, for the spiritualization of these, must three hundred millions be sunk in savagery and starvation? Why should any starve? ... 'Bread! Bread! I do not believe in a God, who cannot give me bread here, giving me eternal bliss in heaven!'¹⁶ First the needy ought to be given education so that they could earn their bread; the teaching of the knowledge of the Self would come later. It was, therefore, only proper for Swamiji to tell his disciple Saratchandra to sacrifice his life for the good of others. Only a real *vira*, having *shraddha* in himself, his guru, and God is capable of that kind of sacrifice.


This then is the fourfold sacrifice: *shraddha*, *virya*, *jnana*, and *utsarga*, sacrifice. This is the ultimate yajna, and it is to be performed without any motive or craving for its fruit: 'this is not mine.' This is the call of the great spiritualist, humanist, patriot, and true citizen Swami Vivekananda, who himself was the epitome of the fourfold sacrifice.

The Highest Blessing

After telling his disciple what he has to do, Swamiji blessed him again by saying: 'If my blessings be of any good to you, I say—may Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna give you his grace. I know of no blessings higher than this.'

We believe that behind Swamiji's towering intellect and rational approach, he was bathed in sublime emotion and love of God. His deep *shraddha* in his guru Sri Ramakrishna is also reflected in those words. Swamiji firmly believes that without the *kripa*, grace, of the Master all the blessings he gave to his disciple cannot fructify. One must endeavour to evolve from the lower levels of existence to the highest, but must not

forget that without the guru's and God's *kripa* self-effort alone cannot accomplish the spiritual goal. That is why the Upanishad says that the Self is attained by the one whom it chooses: '*Yamevaisha vrinute tena labhyah*.'¹⁷ In order that the Self may choose us or we may realize God in our life, we are required to constantly pray and seek the grace of the guru and of God. Tulasidas says that by mere effort it is not possible to attain the goal. Only a few who experience God's grace attains to it: '*Yaha guna sadhan te nahin hoi, tumhari kripa pava koi koi*; this virtue (of dispassion) is not attained by practice, but only a few and far between get it by your grace.'¹⁸

As a final remark, I would like to draw a comparison between Arjuna, who was chosen as the medium to manifest Sri Krishna's message, and Sharatchandra Chakravarty, who was Swamiji's chosen instrument through whom he blessed all of us. 

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His Call Beckons

Dr Joyesh Bagchi

THE CENTURY WE LIVE IN is characterized by the painful dualities of unimaginable affluence and mind-numbing poverty, centralized autocratic power and hopeless powerlessness, surreal flights of knowledge and abject ignorance, hypertrophy at one end and atrophy at the other. This pain is further accentuated by the cold indifference that the world shows towards the amelioration of these problems and the propagation of heartless steps towards 'managing' the conflicts that arise from them. Furthermore, to satisfy the insatiable lust for wealth and power the rich and powerful are incessantly developing devious and despicable ways of self-aggrandizement at the expense of the helpless majority.

On the positive side we find that the century is also pregnant with possibilities. Perhaps more than ever before the world is affirming Swami Vivekananda's keen insight:

The problem of life is becoming deeper and broader every day as the world moves on. The watchword and the essence have been preached in the days of yore when the Vedantic truth was first discovered, the solidarity of all life. One atom in this universe cannot move without dragging the whole world along with it. There cannot be any progress without the whole world following in the wake, and it is becoming every day clearer that the solution of any problem can never be attained on racial, or national, or narrow grounds. Every idea has to become broad till it covers the whole of this world, every aspiration must go on increasing till it has engulfed the whole of humanity, nay, the whole of life, within its scope.¹

On the one hand, globalized networks have enabled the slow permeation of Vedantic principles to give rise to a variegated number of New Age movements. On the other hand, recent history has proved that technology-assisted anonymous networks of concerned courageous individuals can engender social waves that would bring invincible tyrannies to their knees.

Amidst pleasure and pain, struggle and resistance, exuberance, chaos, and volatile expressions of life that the world is witnessing, an either-or situation is slowly emerging: either spiritualize or descend into barbarism. Swami Vivekananda's agenda of spiritualization of the whole human race is occupying an urgent and prominent space in the mental sphere of humankind. Either the world discovers an unshakable, deep-lying, and permanent basis for democratic and libertarian ideals honed over the ages, or humanity will inevitably degenerate, just as do all things that are not rooted in and nourished by spiritual truths.

The life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda have been illuminating the paths of innumerable souls, giving a new meaning to their lives. Renunciation and service were the twin glowing ideals that he placed before us. Over the last century the power behind his persona has been slowly uncoiling itself in the world stage. Countless people have attempted to mould their lives as per their own readings of Swamiji's ideals, a process that has silently moulded the twentieth century.

However, a practical question faces all those who struggle to express in their lives those ideals: how to translate them in our twenty-first-century life. Responding to Swamiji's call one

develops an intense desire to realize the Truth, and yet one has to live in the present technological world of anguish, suffering, and resistance. To live with an intense inward search and the pain of the outward social existence is the challenge of all spiritual seekers.

The world presents a scenario of clashing ideals in which scientific knowledge and technology have accumulated immense power in the hands of a few with greedy, sectarian, and chauvinistic ends. Lived experience has led to the realization that happiness and peace do not accompany material prosperity.

At the same time it is a fact that this is the age of 'the people'. Everywhere in the world common people, the labouring lower classes, are struggling to assert their natural rights, the right to work, to play, to grow, to live with dignity to thus achieve a decent way of life. The human being is indeed asserting its birthright to be human. And Swamiji is the prophet of this struggle to manifest the blissful Divine in each and every one of us.

The past century has been a politico-centric one, with a history of pitfalls that have

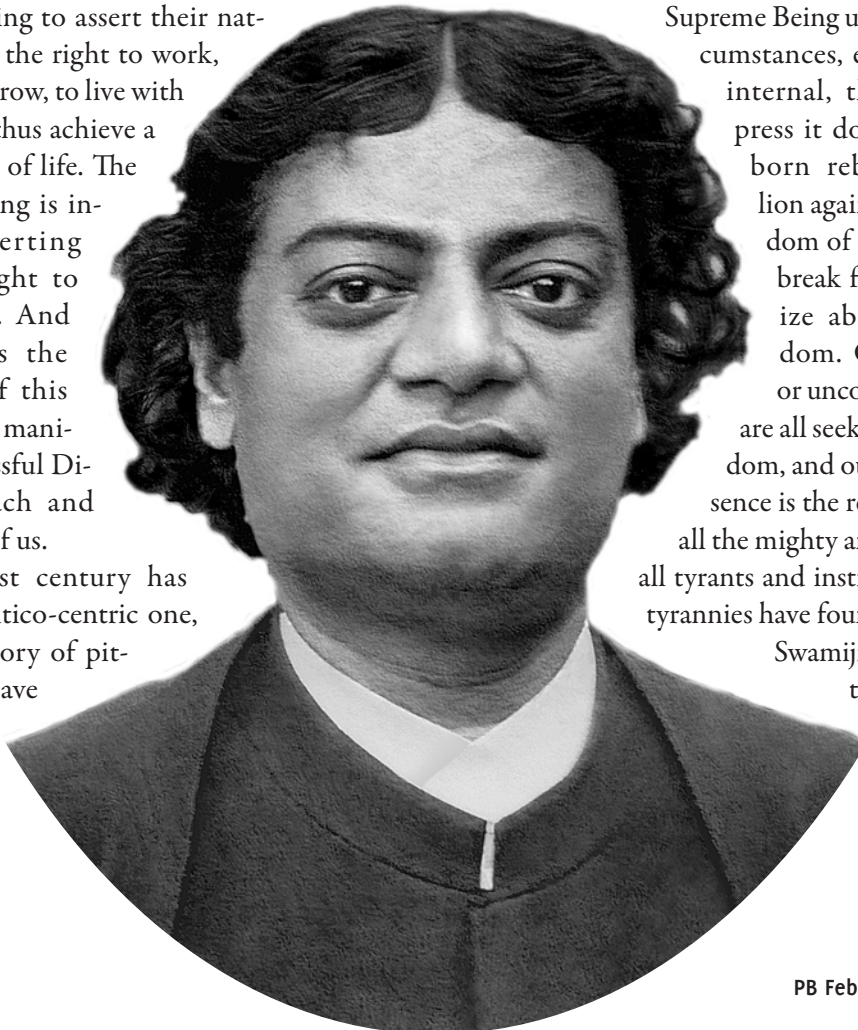
highlighted Swamiji's warning: 'No amount of political or social manipulation of human conditions can cure the evils of life. It is a change of the soul itself for the better that alone will cure the evils of life. No amount of force, or government, or legislative cruelty will change the conditions of a race, but it is spiritual culture and ethical culture alone that can change wrong racial tendencies for the better' (3.182). Spirituality encompasses a far greater field of human life than political doctrines can ever envisage.

Swami Vivekananda's Call

'It is the God within your own self that is propelling you to seek for Him, to realize Him' (2.81).

Our lives are a struggle to manifest the Supreme Being under any circumstances, external and internal, that tries to press it down. We are born rebels—rebellion against the thralldom of the senses to break free and realize absolute freedom. Consciously or unconsciously we are all seeking this freedom, and our human essence is the reef on which all the mighty and powerful, all tyrants and institutionalized tyrannies have foundered.

Swamiji's ideal is not the one of a



permanent spiritual recluse, but that of a heart aching for human misery on every level—physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, political, and of course spiritual. He cried for the ignorant, for the bereaved, for the suppressed, for the miserable of all nations and creeds. With pain and passion he had declared:

Him I call a Mahatman (great soul) whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a Duratman (wicked soul). Let us unite our wills in continued prayer for their good. We may die unknown, unpitied, unbewailed, without accomplishing anything—but not one thought will be lost. It will take effect, sooner or later. My heart is too full to express my feeling; you know it, you can imagine it. So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them! (5.58)

And again, reproving those cold and indifferent supposedly spiritual seekers, he said: ‘Do you think that a man who does not exert himself at all, who only takes the name of Hari, shutting himself up in a room, who remains quiet and indifferent even when seeing a huge amount of wrong and violence done to others before his very eyes, possesses the quality of Sattva? Nothing of the kind, he is only enshrouded in dark Tamas’ (5.352). To engage with the world selflessly, constructively, courageously, with empathy and manliness is the ideal that Swamiji presented for the modern age.

He laid immense stress on manliness, which is one of the first expressions in the body, mind, heart, and will of the Divine, the Self. To possess the quality of manliness is to be established in the Self, to rejoice in the Self, to want nothing, to fear nothing, to dislike nothing, to serve all. Free and strong men and women thinking their own thoughts, speaking their own words,

and hewing their own route to the Infinite are the ones who are able to make the future that Swamiji envisioned. ‘Perfect sincerity, holiness, gigantic intellect, and an all-conquering will. Let only a handful of men work with these, and the whole world will be revolutionized. ... It is patient upbuilding of character, the intense struggle to *realise* the truth, which alone will tell in the future’ (8.335).

Only spiritually free and strong men and women that take their stand on the Atman can truly deify this world, can truly revere it and work in it tirelessly, without desire or fear, and motivated by love alone. Only such men and women can meet the unprecedented challenges of this age, can have the mental strength and will power to renounce and serve without any desire for wealth and name and fame.

The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda tradition has reiterated that renunciation is the foundation of all spiritual disciplines. Swamiji was categorical in declaring that renunciation is the flag and banner of Indian civilization, floating over the world, the one undying thought that India sends again and again as a help to evolving races and as a warning to all tyrannies. Renunciation is the necessary category and fact of life that all sincere seekers sooner or later stumble upon in their journey to the Divine. In Swamiji’s words: ‘The Absolute or the Infinite is trying to express itself in the finite, but there will come a time when it will find that it is impossible, and it will then have to beat a retreat, and this beating a retreat means renunciation which is the real beginning of religion. ... Renounce and give up’ (2.99–100).

The ideal of renunciation is also a reaction to the modern ever-increasing horizon of mad consumerism. It presents the ideal of a simplified joyous and expansive life at play with the Divine, a response to the unsustainable society of affluence characterized by contracted, insecure, and

alienated lives. Swamiji's man-making religion of renunciation and freedom is the antidote to the thick brew of problems cooking in the world today.

Spiritualization of the Human Race

One has to incessantly work to purify the mind of all selfish desires, to give oneself away without any expectation of return, and to be bereft of any hankering for wealth, name, or fame. This may appear to be a difficult, rather impossible, ideal, but whether one likes it or not it has to be attempted for the benefit of oneself and the world. The bold, brave, and fearless have to clear the road for others to follow. Through his clear vision, Swamiji had forecasted: 'Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity' (7.501).

One has to stand on one's feet and struggle on in good and bad times, through dreary and painful roads, for inscrutable is the divine order of things. It is the anonymous, humble, and poor but bold, brave, and free who are most likely to change themselves and the world; this is Swamiji's feeling: 'Trust not the so-called rich, they are more dead than alive. The hope lies in you—in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful. Have faith in the Lord; no policy, it is nothing. Feel for the miserable and look up for help—it *shall come*' (5.16). And again: 'We are poor, my brothers, we are nobodies, but such have been always the instruments of the Most High' (5.58).

In spiritual life one has to undertake activity without having an eye on its results as a practice. Giving up the fruits of work means giving it up to God. One has to work with self-abnegation for the welfare of others. Whatever work one does without attachment only brings good to

oneself and to the world. It is all 'for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many'.

History has stamped each culture with its distinct signature, an ideal or unique note in the grand symphony of human civilization. Each culture provides, so to say, its inimitable fragrance in the bouquet that is formed by the accumulated life experiences of humanity. As per Swami Vivekananda, India's uniqueness has been stamped long back in history with a high note: spirituality, which waxes and wanes in intensity through the ups and downs of India's fortune. It is India's task to nurture its expansive religious acceptance, its ideal of oneness—the grand solidarity of life—and also the universal spirit of renunciation.

The Vedantic ideals that were the exclusive possession of a select few need to be disseminated far and wide in thought, word, and deed for the good of humanity. In Swamiji's words: 'To become broad, to go out, to amalgamate, to universalise, is the end of our aims. ... The more you go out and travel among the nations of the world, the better for you and for your country. ... The first manifest effect of life is expansion. You must expand if you want to live. The moment you have ceased to expand, death is upon you, danger is ahead' (3.271–2).

The process of permeation has to be gradual, without disturbing even the 'roadside dust': 'Our message has gone out to the world many a time, but slowly, silently, unperceived. It is on a par with everything in India. The one characteristic of Indian thought is its silence, its calmness. At the same time the tremendous power that is behind it is never expressed by violence. It is always the silent mesmerism of Indian thought' (3.274).

However, there are several dangers in the way that need to be shunned. One is the wrong conception that we Indians are 'the' people of the world and the rest are inferior to us. The other is


that in the guise of spirituality all kinds of pervasive superstitions, mystery-mongering, and hypocrisy have taken deep roots; these have to be weeded out and thrown aside for ever. Swamiji said: 'I would rather see every one of you rank atheists than superstitious fools, for the atheist is alive and you can make something out of him. But if superstition enters, the brain is gone, the brain is softening, degradation has seized upon the life' (3.278).

Every system, therefore, which weakens the mind, makes one superstitious, makes one mope, makes one desire all sorts of wild impossibilities, mysteries, and superstitions, I do not like, because its effect is dangerous. Such systems never bring any good; such things create morbidity in the mind, make it weak, so weak that in course of time it will be almost impossible to receive truth or live up to it. Strength, therefore, is the one thing needful. Strength is the medicine for the world's disease. Strength is the medicine which the poor must have when tyrannised over by the rich. Strength is the medicine that the ignorant must have when oppressed by the learned; and it is the medicine that sinners must have when tyrannised over by other sinners (2.201).

Incessant Practice

A strange mystical law at times embodies to adjust the route of ascension suited for the age. In Ramakrishna-Vivekananda that law embodied itself to call forth the soul within us. It is well known that Swamiji's—indeed Sri Ramakrishna's—ideal of a perfected personality involves the integration of the four yogas of work, devotion, psychic control, and philosophy. Life is much more than mere conformity with the rules of self-preservation and self-aggrandizement; life is an incessant struggle, internal and external, to manifest the Divine. The intense and sincere practice of spiritual disciplines internally and the

continuation of spiritual practice by selfless engagement with the world outside is the ideal that Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji have established.


Swamiji, and as an extension of his ideal the Ramakrishna movement, stands for actual practice and realization of the spiritual truths and not mere intellectual assent to doctrines and dogmas. Religion is not parroting the thoughts of others, it is being and becoming, it is realization. The world is a gymnasium where one has to live and work to transcend one's desire and ego to finally manifest one's true nature, the Divine within. 

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(Continued from page 190)

'He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva; and if he sees Shiva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary. He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples' (3.142). With one blow he redirects the devotion of the devoted and engages the sympathy and cooperation of those who are not inclined to traditional devotion.

The world has many of problems, but it also has many young people. Swami Vivekananda's spiritual values for the youth are a landmark for the improvement of the whole world. 

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The Being of Humankind

Prof S C Malik



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA suggested many different ways to deal with the present human predicament. I will refer to one, out of the many, which deals with universalization and identity. More than a century ago Swamiji initiated a powerful worldwide movement to bring about global harmony. He was a perfect example of one who had realized the Self and strove to bring this realization to all humanity.

For Swamiji, Consciousness was the focal point of all research and dialogue, for it is the unity underlying all disparate people, religions, and ideologies. This focal point can remove all forms of bigotry, persecution, sectarianism, and religious fundamentalism. Swamiji states that ignorance of the Self is the cause of the problems of the world. He elaborates by saying that the source of the human predicament is the mistaken belief that the Self is a mortal, pain-ridden mind-body complex. Swamiji's message is that

universal Consciousness, or the one Being, is the true nature of all the manifold forms, just as water is the true nature of all different whirlpools, waves, bubbles, and currents in the ocean. It is mandatory for humankind today to realize the interconnectedness of the universe within the context of Consciousness, which is conceptualized differently in different cultures and religions as God, Self, Being, or in many other ways.

The knowledge of the Self is not a thought, or a feeling, or an acquired belief. It is a state of intense awareness of the Reality, of what one already is, has always been, and will always be. In the quest for real knowledge, Truth is directly lived and perceived as it is: 'Man is to become divine by realising the divine.'¹ Meditation and discernment are the means to separate the Self from its identification with the mind and the body. It is the process of 'knowing oneself', to paraphrase the Socratic dictum. But humanity has done little

progress in the way to know itself, its true nature. Swamiji reminds us that each one has the potential to realize the Self: 'Prophets were not unique; they were men as you and I. ... The very fact that one man ever reached that state, proves that it is possible for every man to do so' (1.185).

This paper briefly examines why humankind does not find or move towards the ideal stated by Swamiji. It points to the fact that outdated paradigms continue to dominate civilization even in the twenty-first century, and that we are unconsciously following them and causing unprecedented disastrous results all around.

The Essence within

Modern civilization continues to be confronted by a series of crises, the predominant being a psycho-spiritual one. And this crisis has not been given serious consideration. Humankind has taken giant scientific and technological strides, but all these marvellous successes have also brought about impending nuclear and ecological disasters. Unprecedented famines, natural disasters, wars in which millions of innocent people have been systematically annihilated are taking place. And those that are not directly affected by these things have to suffer the tremendous socio-political and economic upheavals that are causing an identity crisis all over the world.

Underlying the current problems are certain assumptions, like a linear-time way of thinking, which is based on a cause and effect framework that creates the illusion of a series of logically connected events. There is also a binary system that confronts you with me, nature with human, East with West, subjectivity with objectivity, science with spirituality, and so on. All these outmoded paradigms have brought about disturbances everywhere.

It is clear that a new paradigmatic shift has become imperative to bring into focus Swamiji's

idea of Being. This shift is required in the human psyche. Despite brilliant scientific and intellectual assessments, all blueprints of progress are inevitably subsumed under the old linear-thought paradigm. This old paradigm works by fragmenting things in order to analyse the problem and reorganize a total picture through a piecemeal examination of accumulated data. Though current science speaks of interconnectedness, it too is swallowed under this old way of thinking. It results in the belief that ideals can be achieved within a linear-time frame, given enough time, and that one day all problems will be cleared. One is seldom aware of this in the conditioned ways we live. Each one of us is so deeply conditioned that this way of thinking seems to be the only 'practical' way to have and achieve anything, including spirituality. Naturally, these attempts are futile; it is like wearing cracked glasses and then trying to put together the broken view of the world.

The paradigm shift under discussion involves the awakening of those dormant areas of the brain wherein lies intuition and insight, away from the mechanical working of the reptilian-mammalian brain. The awareness of being conditioned is a prerequisite for awakening those dormant areas of the brain. There are only a few individuals who are creative in all spheres of life, because they function as pure Consciousness. They are in touch with the innermost psyche of the universal mind. The reference is to those ontological unitary states that are existential-experiential. This knowledge comes from the 'impersonal' whole mind, and it comes without effort, spontaneously. In these states there are no comparisons and no categories subjected to measurement—it is a mind without measure. It is that state in which the discursive thought is absent. This is a 'no-movement' silence, generally referred to as ineffable.

We are this essence, and not who we think we are in terms of symbols and metaphors of the conceptual world. It is the One that is to be remembered by each person at all times. But when one tries to understand it, the conditioned mind takes over by redefining such moments into mechanical thought, via rationalization and analysis. By dwelling in the Being, which is in touch with inner silent spaces, one learns to listen rather than merely hear, and see rather than merely look. This allows the body-brain organism to function sensitively, fully. It is a state where one is 'no-thing' and yet everything, when the absence of the 'I' makes room for the universal Presence to be manifest. The reference is to the creative process par excellence, where perception is action and everything is 'now'.

Fragmentation and Linear Time

In the evolutionary history of humans the fragmentary way of thinking helped us cope with the external world. But now overspecialization of things and knowledge has made us emotionally fragmented and socially dysfunctional. Fragmentation is not merely conceptual, it is psychological and is the cause of the basic anguish of modern humans. Against this illness, fundamental questions of a different order have to be raised, since no amount of old accumulated data can provide a breakthrough. A prerequisite for doing it is, for a true enquirer, to jump out of not only one's professional, national, and parochial identities, but also out of one's socio-cultural identity.

At another level, science has narrowed the gap between the subject and the object; the viewer and the viewed are inextricably tied to each other. As a result all subjective knowledge is changing the view of the objective world, and hence the writing of human events is not objectively possible. An understanding of cultural

phenomena requires a multidimensional inter-relatedness that happens simultaneously, in processes and patterns that do not take recourse to linear cause-effect concepts. Causation also creates psychological anxieties, since thought moves between the past and the future without realizing that both are in fact the same.

Knowing

It is important to examine, in the above context, how and in what way do we know what we know, given our conditioning. At the psychological level, the processes of knowing and communicating are operational at the following three levels: (i) thought processes, consisting of images, symbols, concepts, language; (ii) experiencing, which consists of emotions, feelings, intuition; and, (iii) being-ness, consisting of insight, attention, awareness, and consciousness.

These three areas interact, especially in moments of total holistic functioning of the mind. But normally life operates at the first and second levels, and this is what governs 'normal' human behaviour. Of course, nothing radical can happen as long as one is not even aware that one is in a box. 'Being-ness' encompasses both the first and second levels and allows for creativity to be felt and experienced. Being is beyond boundaries, beyond the known, beyond dualities. In these creative raptures one lives moment to moment, not from something to something or from nothing to something, but from being to being. Psychologically speaking it means the dying, moment to moment, of all of one's yesterdays and tomorrows. One's personal identity remains at the minimum operational level since the source of it all is being now, the universal oneness, the Self.

In 'normal' life one wants to be in the safe box, to protect one's ego from anxiety, pain, and so on. But the more one plays this game,

the more isolated one becomes in the feeling of being alive. This isolated self feels lonely not due to lack of people around, but because one is not being one's Self, despite all efforts to relate and be nice to others. It is in this process that a multitude of reactions form, and the 'me' and its extensions emerge from past memories, actual or imagined, to increase the isolation. One forgets that pure experiencing, or knowing, comes from the impersonal Consciousness, in which the experiencer and the experienced are only secondary.


But what is 'being', this timelessness? This is the Reality, which is available to everyone, albeit one may not be aware of it. Yet 'being' is not a thing, an object to be seen or felt or known. It is like electricity, which is known only through its effects but never by itself. There is no direct proof of it in an objective sense. The awareness comes from knowing who one is, rather than from who 'one thinks' one is. This perception makes one fully awake and alive.

Peace of Mind

Most of us continue to perpetuate the same old way of living, which involves compromises, limited choices, graft, and so on. This is a consequence of the linear mind, through which we want to bring order in the outer world—probably with all good intentions. But as the common saying goes: the way to hell is paved with good intentions! We are part of the action-reaction mode of existence that operates unconsciously. The result is a slow development and progress, and always with the illusion of the 'tomorrow'. But true revolutionary steps imply a total break from the past, psychologically speaking, and a discontinuity in the sense of a new creation in the moments of *now*. Thinking, feeling, and experiencing are one total process that the mind splits into the knower, known, and knowing.

This is the usual mechanical way of living, created by the fission of duality. But it is from a 'you and me' world of fusion that real harmony comes. This is the paradigmatic shift we are discussing about. It is like a river flowing naturally down towards the ocean rather than struggling against the stream of the universe. No longer is one 'doing' to find love; it is love that instantly brings about 'doing'—and even having. This 'being', which has its own divine intelligence, is manifested in the hologram of the body-brain system.

In recent years the dynamic nature of the universe as a total system has prominently emerged in many fields. But somehow holism has become another 'ism', something to be achieved within another linear formulation, another formula to be captured. Practical people make more plans, set up institutions to manifest ancient mystic insights within a so-called scientific methodology. But since personal psychological transformation has not taken place, nothing seems to work naturally. It is reduced to another intellectual debate that functions, very subtly and attractively, through logic and rationality. After all, nothing will be allowed to threaten our old identities, despite claims to the contrary, that encourage us to go towards freedom. One of those ancient identities is the right to question 'who am I?' If this question is properly pursued, then our 'being' becomes a 'becoming', and not vice versa. As Socrates declared: 'An unexamined life is not worth living.'

It is time to provide a breakthrough from the stranglehold of the linear mind. Then only humankind can come out of its present crisis. 

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Eternal Words

Swami Adbhutananda

Compiled by Swami Siddhananda; translated by Swami Sarvadevananda

(Continued from the December 2012 issue)

DO YOU COME TO WATCH what a sadhu is doing or what he is not doing at night? This is very bad. A sadhu is independent. He will perform sadhanas at his own volition. When he doesn't care to, he won't do them. What is the need of your seeing such things? A sadhu doesn't care for any one. What will you accomplish by watching him?

It is inauspicious to criticize one whom God ordains as fit and selects to do his special work. Even God becomes displeased with someone who criticizes.

One should not see faults in others; rather, one should only see their merits. Everyone has some fault or other. Some people's faults stay hidden.

Why does a person take delight in criticizing others? It is done to glorify oneself.

Does one whose mind cries out for God give ear to a few petty words of praise and blame? In this world such things will always be present. Wearing the ochre cloth, if you cannot give up such things, what have you achieved?

It is forbidden for a sannyasin to slander others or gossip. It is wrong to wear an ochre cloth with the idea of being praised. One must first understand the nobility of that cloth and only then should one wear it. If one does whatever one likes, it is not religion but waywardness.

It is malicious to entertain the divisive thought that the people of one's country should have abundant food while another country's people should starve to death.

Worldly Possessions and Worldly Wisdom

We are such scoundrels that if but once there rises a desire to call upon God, we immediately start calculating by thinking: 'If I call upon him offering my heart and soul, who will feed me and my family? Where shall I find a place to stay?' Not for one second do we think of the many people in this world who have left their hearths and homes for God. Do they ever lack anything? For those who renounce everything for him, God surely feeds them, clothes them, and supplies them with every strength and support. He makes everything easy for them. It is more than enough if by taking his name one can just come out of this worldly life.

If a man who used to have a good income dies, his son laments saying: 'What will happen to me?' His wife laments thinking: 'What will happen to me?' They never think for a moment about the fate of the one who has passed away. How many pray to God saying: 'Oh Lord, please forgive him if he has committed any wrong.' They don't do that. Everyone is busy with one's interest. This is the world.

In this world if one completes his education but can't earn any money, people call him a fool. But if the most dull-witted person happens to make money, they call him a genius. There is no respect for knowledge.

Those who have some money will call a guileless person who has no pride or ego crazy. They will certainly call a person with no money crazy.

Meanwhile, you people who day and night live by your egos think yourselves to be superior! Those people have cast off their pride and ego entirely knowing them to be worthless. Don't you see? This is undoubtedly the special grace of God. See how that man is humbly coming here to give a very ordinary gift; yet, he is not embarrassed. This is surely the right type of love. Some people used to say: 'Sir, that sadhu is accepting money.' Hearing that, the Master used to get annoyed and say: 'What are these rascals talking about? Should the sadhus live on air? They have given up all worldly pleasures; yet, seeing them have the slightest comfort, people feel jealous. Is there any means of salvation for such people?' Because of this, the Master used to say: 'People come here because they don't have to give a donation! They are worldly people. Money is their blood. They are pained to part with it.'

How will a person understand the significance of dharma? Day and night they are only saying: 'Oh money, where are you? Oh my dear, how can I get you?' For them money is dharma—money is karma—money is verily the supreme austerity. Where is money? My dear money! Money, money, money, money!

Don't associate with worldly-minded householders. One shouldn't even come within their sphere of influence. Do you think that I don't see? Still, since one shouldn't say things that will pain the hearts of others, I keep quiet. But when I see you engage yourselves in too many excesses, it is solely for your own good that I warn you. Sadhus shouldn't mix with bad householders. They will deposit their maya on the sadhus' shoulders.

Reliance on God

Surely God is there. Since we don't yearn to know him, we can't recognize his existence. If you want to realize God, you must accept pain

and suffering and reject as crow droppings all honour, dishonour, and fear of public disgrace. Then only will his grace come.

When people are happy, do they seek God? At those times a person thinks: 'I myself am the master, the Lord.' It is but natural that one worships God in times of trouble. But that man who also calls on God during times of joy is a true human being. Tulasidas says: 'All worship the Lord in times of sorrow; none worship him in times of joy. If one worships him in happiness, from where can sorrow come?'

Whoever accepts God will be saved. Such persons will receive his bliss and be happy. Those who cannot accept him will suffer in anguish.

Just as one who having earned a degree believes that everything is futile if he can't get a good job, know for certain that all of a man's studies are in vain if, at their conclusion, he can't grow in faith and devotion to God.

God is verily present within each person. Is he not present in you? Due to our foolishness, we can't comprehend this. Sri Krishna says: 'Verily, I am full; everything is just a part of me.'

What is the result of all of one's faith and trust in God? If one's intentions and actions are directed towards God and dishonest work is rejected, both the individual and society will prosper. There is a Master above. The dishonest worker is sure to suffer.

It will never work for everyone in the household to assume the role of the master of the house. That household runs the best which has just one master. The same in spiritual life: if one does not make God the master, one can't achieve results. But we fail to fear the one whom we should fear, while we fear the one whom we should not! If a person knows that God is ever-present, can he commit any offence?

People call upon God to remove their miseries. God is not the subject of flattery. Accept

him. That is very good. Don't accept him. That is also good. What does it matter to him whether you believe in him or not?

All powers will come to the one who takes refuge in God. God is all-powerful. Everyone is subject to happiness and misery. Even the avatars suffer greatly by taking a human birth. One should pray to God and ask him: 'Let me not forget you, either in happiness or misery. Let me endure it all!'

Hiding from God, what progress can you make? He is beyond the ken of our worldly vision, yet he sees everything. He is omniscient.

God is not subject to rules or regulations. Still, when he binds himself with his own maya—acting as an embodied being in his lila—even he is not free. No one can know where his rules end. At least it is not possible to discern it with our little minds. But if one becomes surcharged with him, one can understand both God and his devotees. Rules and regulations are there for you and me.

There is a great difference between the instruction coming from God and the instruction

coming from a human. God's pronouncements are undoubtedly correct. Worship God; sing his glories. All strength arises only from his strength. If you don't acknowledge him, what does that matter to God?

Everything happens in time. Nothing happens until the time is ripe. It will not do for you to be restless. You should remain patient. Even falling into some adversity, remain patient. If you can hold steady in such a predicament and trust in God, surely some spiritual benefit is bound to come to you.

The Vision of God

So long as one lacks Self-realization, the understanding that the guru and God are one will not rise. Though you may discern a thousand times and exercise your reason, doubts will surely beset you. But if by chance at any point of time Self-realization happens, all doubts will be destroyed and you will experience that the guru and God are one. So long as that does not happen, you should know that you have some imperfection.

That sadhu who has realized God knows who

God is and what renunciation is. It is not enough to merely take the garb of a monk! God-realization is verily the utmost goal.

There is a vast difference between Self-realization and book reading.

Can one be compelled to adopt the spirit of Advaita? The Master used to say that when the fruit becomes big, the flower falls off automatically. The Master couldn't even walk over grass. Such is the all-pervasive undifferentiated knowledge of Brahman—spontaneous Self-knowledge. One should continue discerning between the truth of Dvaita and Advaita. Then, gradually, realization will come.

Prahlada realized God. One can

Narasimha killing Hiranyakashipu, as Prahlada watches at the left (18th cent.)



realize God solely by living a pure and stainless life. God is surely present. He can be seen. The life of Prahlada was pure and unblemished; he had the faith that God is omnipresent. God gives his vision to the one who calls him with an earnest cry.

Some say: 'Where is God? Does he exist?' Those who are genuine renunciates are indeed fortunate. They say: 'If God exists, we will go to him first because our lives are pure. We have never harmed a soul in this world. Those of you who have oppressed and tortured others to gain the pleasures of worldly life will not be able to go near God.' For this reason Swamiji used to say: 'If there is no God, whether I realize him or not, even so, I am saved from the troubles of this world, for I have renounced all its worldly pleasures and have done no harm to anyone.' Only a genuine renunciate can say this.

No one has seen God. Yet, that person is fortunate indeed who, after seeing his works, can acknowledge him.

Be like a Shiva linga that rises of its own from beneath the ground and don't be like an installed Shiva linga. Hearing that at a certain place a Shiva linga has emerged of its own from the ground, people go in large numbers to see it. How many go to see a Shiva linga that has been installed by people? That is why I tell you, by engaging in devotion and sadhana realize the truth yourself!

What more shall I say? God is. This is true without a doubt. Call on him. By his grace, you will get his vision.

The Master used to say: 'Don't become hypnotized by seeing the universe; try to know the Lord of the universe.'

God manifests through action. Is God far away? You don't see him because you lack sadhana. He exists in every heart. He is nearer than the near.

Karma done with desire creates bondage; karma done without desire purifies the mind. If one's heart becomes pure, God, who is Truth itself, will manifest. Among all work the greatest is to perform spiritual and devotional practices and to call on God. If one earnestly calls on him, he will certainly appear.

Did you go to see Vishvanath [the Shiva of the main temple in Varanasi]? Yes! You should go daily. Vishvanath is there. I tell you honestly, he is there; he is palpably there. To some, he is manifest, but to others, he is hidden.

Dependence on God

One day when the Pandavas were living in the forest, the sage Durvasa asked Duryodhana: 'When shall I go to see the Pandavas?' Knowing that Durvasa had an extremely angry temperament, Duryodhana deviously responded: 'Please visit them after dusk.' The Pandavas were then living solely on alms and after finishing their evening meal, they wouldn't be able to host any guests. Unaware of any of this, Durvasa thought Duryodhana probably told him to visit the Pandavas at night because then the Pandavas would come together after hunting all day. With this thought in his mind, Durvasa and his sixty-thousand disciples set out to visit the Pandavas at night. As soon as Yudhisthira saw the sage Durvasa approaching, he grew extremely alarmed thinking that the Pandavas would likely be destroyed [by Durvasa's anger] that very day. Yudhisthira welcomed the sage saying: 'What a great fortune is mine.' Observing that dusk was nearly over Durvasa announced: 'I shall eat here today.' He then proceeded to the riverbank to perform his evening prayers. That was the twelfth day of the moon, and Durvasa had been fasting from the eleventh day. Remembering that there was no food at the Pandavas' home, Yudhisthira prayed

to his friend Sri Krishna. Sri Krishna could not remain unmoved by his call; he appeared before Draupadi and told her: 'I am very hungry. If you have anything at home, give it to me.' Draupadi responded: 'O Lord, there is nothing as leftovers in our home.' However, there were in fact a few leftover spinach leaves. After eating those leaves with a little water and burping, Sri Krishna returned home. Seeing that Durvasa had been delayed, Yudhisthira sent Bhima to bring some news about him. Bhima saw that Durvasa was about to fall asleep. Durvasa told Bhima: 'I am very tired. I won't eat anything tonight. Tomorrow I shall break my fast.' On hearing of this, Yudhisthira started thinking that everything is the play of Sri Krishna! In this way, those who depend always on God need not face any difficulties or troubles. One can also see that everyone is pleased with those with whom God is pleased.

If one keeps one's mind on God, all of one's fears depart. The main thing is to keep the mind on God. How will a man realize this; by what disguise will God come to him to give him the right understanding? One should pray to him earnestly. Let it not be for show. If a prayer is from the heart, God listens.

God does not take the responsibility of one with a selfish motive.

King Yudhisthira was extremely honest. He depended entirely on Sri Krishna. The Pandavas were deeply religious. They had not the least desire to enjoy royal pleasures. They told the Kauravas: 'Listen, please give us five villages. As we have taken physical bodies, we should have to protect them by some means. There is no other option.' Many disasters took place because the Kauravas didn't grant the Pandavas' request. Due to their total dependence on God, the Pandavas were saved. God himself takes charge of those who depend on him.

Nobody performs any spiritual practices. They only come here to make me talk. See the folly, they come here to test a holy man! If one displeases a sadhu, one has to face many adversities. Why should a sadhu talk just to amuse your mind? My dear, such a sadhu's actions are beneath even those of a householder! A holy man does not care for anyone except God. For this reason alone sadhus do not mix with worldly-minded householders. Is there any lack of food for a sadhu? The one who wears the ochre cloth just to fill his stomach will worry; but why should a (true) sadhu worry? Food will come to him wherever he calls on God. God will surely feed the sadhus.

Devotees don't want to trouble God for petty things so long as they can manage themselves. It seems to me that it is better not to bother God for all those trifling things.

Man's desires are never satisfied. His suffering never leaves him at any point of time, even when God gives him plenty of money. Suffering is relieved only by telling God about one's suffering. Men cry out superficially: 'Oh Lord! Oh Lord!' Doesn't God already know who needs what? He knows everyone's needs and gives everyone whatever accords with his karma. It is because people lack faith and reliance on God that they endure so much distress. Adversity also comes to those who associate with them. Such people themselves suffer and cause others to suffer as well. People live in hope, but suffer when their expectations are too high. For this reason one should be content and trust in God's will. God is the embodiment of endless compassion. There will be no more suffering if one can discern by thinking: 'As God understands more than I do, let me be satisfied with whatever, by his grace, he gives to me.'

Many become restless when afflicted with disease or stricken by adversities or such things.

At those times one should keep steady, have patience, and call on God with intense faith and devotion. One should try to heal the disease as much as possible by following whatever medical advice is prescribed. The Master said: 'Surely medicine works!' Where will the medicinal benefit of the plant go? Even if that remedy doesn't cure you, what will you gain by worrying? You should know that everything is now in God's hands.

A devotee will not trouble God. If a devotee surrenders to God, taking his name, God will surely feed that devotee. Why then is there any need to complain to God? It is enough to do meditation and japa after eating the alms obtained by begging. What additional need is there to practise silence?

How can one who has no dependence on God do meditation and japa? Unless one depends on Him, nothing happens.

Purity and the Noble Ideal

If one remains pure, some day or another, one will surely realize the essence of spirituality. God manifests himself wherever there is Truth, as Sri Krishna manifested himself before Arjuna.

Taking a human body in this Kali yuga, even if one eats a little fish or meat, what's the harm? For one who lives a pure life there is no harm in this. Even people who eat fish and meat are calling upon God saying: 'Oh Lord! Oh Lord!' And you people who abstain from eating fish or meat are leading impure lives! Be pure. God reveals his grace to those who are stainless.

Can everyone digest the unearned food received from the *satra* (almshouse)? Many times it has the opposite result. It is very difficult to digest the food from the *satra* because thousands of desires cling to such food. One must perform intense meditation and japa; only then is its impact counteracted.

It cannot be expressed how pleased the Master would be upon finding that a person is tidy and clean. He disliked any inclination for dirtiness. A person must be clean inside and outside.

It is highly regrettable that holy ones are leaving this world. Who can say what disasters await this world? It is truly inauspicious if the holy ones leave. What a terrible time has come that sadhus are leaving their bodies. The Master used to say: 'If sadhus no longer remain, it is a sign of destruction.' The presence of sadhus creates intense spiritual power; people with bad tendencies can't become powerful.

Even if a Muslim gives you food with love, you should eat it without hesitation knowing that you will remain pure. Anything given with faith and devotion is sattvic.

Nothing is attained at all if one doesn't know the Truth. Try to know the Truth. No malice can remain where God, who is the embodiment of Truth, is present. If you don't try to know the Truth, Truth will not reveal itself to you and malevolence will persist instead. Wherever there is untruthfulness, there is pettiness. Where Truth is revealed, the entire environment is transformed. Suppose in a family one brother earns more than the other and the elder brother tells the younger (or vice versa): 'Why are you growing anxious because you can't earn more money? Who knows how many days we will stay in this world? As we have entered into family life, it is enough if our children can somehow get a square meal.' This is a true brother. A good wife tells her husband: 'He is your own brother; we are only in this world for a few days!' Confrontations cannot arise in such homes. When the current of dharma grows strong, one even feels brotherly love towards a stranger; the sense of trust, devotion, and liberty are strengthened.

(To be continued)

Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

Gangadharendra Saraswati

Translated from Sanskrit and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda

(Continued from the December 2012 issue)

TILL NOW it has been established that the contemplation on Vedic dicta like ‘Thou art That’ leads to the knowledge of Brahman. There are many arguments of many schools of thought against this position, which will now be taken up one by one. Presently, the arguments against the purported analysis of the term ‘Thou’ are being enumerated in the next two verses, which are in the *śārdūla-vikrīḍita* metre.

देहं केऽपि वदन्ति खानि तु परे प्राणान्मनश्चापरे
बुद्धिं च क्षणिकां स्थिरामथ परे केचिच्चितं निस्सुखाम् ।
आत्मानं जडचित्स्वभावमपरे चिद्वज्जडं चेतरे
सत्यज्ञानसुखाद्वितीयमपरे तत्राऽस्य को निश्चयः ॥ १२ ॥

Some (Charvakas) say that the body is the Atman, some other (schools of Charvaka) hold that the sense organs constitute the Atman, and some others (among the Charvakas) say that the vital breath is the Atman. Some others (among the schools of Charvaka) hold that the mind is the Atman. Some others (like the Vainashika Buddhists) consider the transient intellect as the Atman. Others (like Bhaskara) hold that the *viññānamaya koṣa*, the sheath of the intellect, is the Atman. Others (like the followers of Sankhya and Yoga) hold that consciousness free from happiness and misery is the Atman. Others (belonging to the Kumarila Bhatta school of Mimamsa) believe that the Atman is a combination of matter and consciousness. Some others (belonging to the Prabhakara school of Mimamsa and the Naiyayikas) hold that the Atman is

matter appearing as consciousness. Others (the Advaita Vedantins) hold that the Atman is unaffected by time, self-revealing, and non-dual. What is the certainty (about the nature of the Atman) there (in the midst of such conflicting opinions)?

There are conflicting theories about the Atman. Charvakas—*cārvāka* means one having sweet speech—generally hold that the individual is not immortal. Even within this school there are varying opinions. Some Charvakas, who think like idiots, hold that the body, made up of flesh and bones, is the Atman. When one makes statements like ‘I am fair-complexioned’, ‘I am fat’, it is the body that is referred to as the substratum of fair-complexion-ness and fatness. Knowledge, happiness, and the sense of ego are only known from inference and are against direct perception. This is so because inference is a different means of knowledge and also because it gives an opposite meaning not in accordance with direct perception. Therefore, the gross body seen by the eyes and having the characteristics of growth and decay is the Atman. This is the opinion of a school of Charvakas.

Another school of Charvakas says that in statements like ‘I am one-eyed’, ‘I am deaf’, ‘I am unable to see’, ‘I am unable to hear’, the nature of the sense organs are taken to be the nature of the Atman, and so the sense organs constitute the Atman. This is the most logical conclusion

according to them. They hold that this is more valid a conclusion than that of the first group of Charvakas because it goes deeper than the idea of the gross body being the Atman.

There is another school of Charvakas who do not agree with the two schools mentioned above. They say that the gross body cannot be the Atman, because if it were so then even a dead body should be considered alive, which is absurd. The gross body, which is loved and respected, is feared after the death of the individual. As Acharya Shankara eloquently puts it: 'After the vital breath leaves the body, even the wife is afraid of it.'⁷¹ Therefore, it is definitely not the body that is the Atman. The sense organs too cannot be said to be the Atman, because when in sleep or deep sleep the sense organs do not work; the individual is yet alive due to the presence of the vital breath. Further, when the vital breath becomes weak, the individual faints and loses consciousness and life is put in danger. This school of Charvakas concludes, therefore, that it is the vital breath that is the Atman.

Another school of the Charvakas counters this position. They hold that though the gross body, the sense organs, and the vital breath are needed for an individual to function, it is the mind that controls all these. It is by the application and withdrawal of the mind that knowledge, happiness, misery, and the like arise, as is seen in daily experience. The scriptures too declare: '(They say), "I was absent-minded, I did not see it", "I was absent-minded, I did not hear it." It is through the mind that one sees and hears.'⁷² Swami Vivekananda describes the role of the mind in the process of sense perception:

I am looking at you. How many things are necessary for this vision? First, the eyes. For if I am perfect in every other way, and yet have no eyes, I shall not be able to see you. Secondly,

the real organ of vision. For the eyes are not the organs. They are but the instruments of vision, and behind them is the real organ, the nerve centre in the brain. If that centre be injured, a man may have the clearest pair of eyes, yet he will not be able to see anything. So, it is necessary that this centre, or the real organ, be there. Thus, with all our senses. The external ear is but the instrument for carrying the vibration of sound inward to the centre. Yet, that is not sufficient. Suppose in your library you are intently reading a book, and the clock strikes, yet you do not hear it. The sound is there, the pulsations in the air are there, the ear and the centre are also there, and these vibrations have been carried through the ear to the centre, and yet you do not hear it. What is wanting? The mind is not there. Thus we see that the third thing necessary is, that the mind must be there. First the external instruments, then the organ to which this external instrument will carry the sensation, and lastly the organ itself must be joined to the mind. When the mind is not joined to the organ, the organ and the ear may take the impression, and yet we shall not be conscious of it.⁷³

Thus this school of Charvakas holds that the mind is the Atman. Now let us look at the differing standpoint of the Vainashika Buddhists, also called Sarva-Vainashika or Shunyavadins. Who are Vainashika Buddhists or Shunyavadins? They form a school of Buddhism that does not categorize or ascribe a nature to the ultimate Reality or the final Truth. It is probably the most misunderstood philosophy. Vedantins call this school Vainashika Buddhism, the Buddhism of destruction. This school is labelled as a form of nihilism. The followers of this school, which dates even before Ashvagoshā and had Nagarjuna as one of its principal exponents, call themselves Madhyamikas, the followers of the middle-path of Buddha. A scholar clarifies the standpoint of this school of Buddhism:

Unfortunately the word 'Shūnya' has been gravely misunderstood. The literal meaning of the word which is negation or void has been the cause of much misunderstanding. The word is used by the Mādhyamikas in a different philosophical sense. Ignoring the real philosophical meaning of the word 'Shūnya' and taking it only in its literal sense, many thinkers, eastern and western, ancient, medieval and modern have unfortunately committed that horrible blunder which has led them to thoroughly misunderstand Shūnyavada and to condemn it as a hopeless scepticism and a self-condemned nihilism. Shūnya, according to the Mādhyamika, we emphatically maintain, does not mean a 'nothing' or an 'empty void' or a 'negative abyss'. Shūnya essentially means Indescribable (*avāchya* or *anabhilāpya*) as it is beyond the four categories of intellect (*chatuskoṭi-vinirmukta*). It is Reality which ultimately transcends existence, non-existence, both and neither. It is neither affirmation nor negation nor both nor neither.⁷⁴

Thus these Vainashika Buddhists or Shunya-vadins hold that the transient intellect, *kṣāṇikām buddhī*, is the Atman. Though the mind gets dissolved in the state of deep sleep and there is no existence of the mind in that state, still the individual is alive. The true nature of the Atman is externally perceptible and imperceptible, knowable and unknowable, and its appearance changes; therefore, the intellect, which is transient, alone is the Atman. It is the continuous flow of the stream of consciousness. This is the view of the Shunyavadi Buddhists.

Bhaskara and others have a different view. They say that the Atman cannot be the transient intellect as it goes against experience. If this point of view is upheld, Bhaskara's school says that it will be impossible to explain the phenomena of bondage and liberation and also it will make the scriptures useless. Further, there is no way to establish the constant flow of the

stream of consciousness, and so the eternal *vijñānamaya koṣa*, sheath of intellect, characterized by the sense of doer-ship and the relation with the mind, is the Atman.

The followers of Sankhya and Patanjali's Yoga have a different opinion on the nature of the Atman. They say that if it were held that the Atman has the characteristics of happiness and misery, then it will have modifications, will not be able to attain liberation, and will become transient. Thus happiness and misery are modifications of only the external attributes ascribed to the Atman. The Atman is unattached, indifferent, and of the nature of pure Consciousness. Due to the ignorance of getting identified with the qualities of Prakriti, the Atman is caught into the bondage of the sense of doer-ship and on attaining knowledge is liberated from this bondage. Thus Sankhya and Patanjali's Yoga hold that the nature of the Atman is free from happiness, ego, and the like and is just pure Consciousness.

The followers of Kumarila Bhatta believe that the Atman is a combination of consciousness and matter. Different persons experience different results according to their actions. This is the system or law of nature. Both good and bad actions bear fruit. The material part of the Atman undergoes changes in the form of happiness and misery. The other part of the Atman is Consciousness. Just like a firefly, which is partly luminous and partly dark, the Atman is partly conscious and partly material. This is the viewpoint of the Mimamsa school of Kumarila Bhatta. The followers of the Prabhakara school of Mimamsa and the followers of Nyaya hold that though there is something material in the Atman, Consciousness pervades it just like space pervades a pot. Knowledge is the understanding that matter has the semblance of Consciousness because Consciousness pervades it. These are

the opinions of various schools regarding the nature of the Atman.

The Advaita Vedantins believe that the Atman is unaffected by or beyond the three phases of time—past, present, and future. The wandering mendicants who follow Advaita Vedanta opine that the bliss arising out of self-revealing knowledge, which is not dependent on anything, is indicative of the destruction of the false knowledge of duality and the realization of the non-dual Atman. With so many conflicting opinions regarding the true nature of the Atman, what will be the plight of the seekers of Self-realization? What is the certainty of our attaining the goal? Without realizing one's true nature, we cannot have any certainty—this is the idea.

आहुःकेचिदगुं शरीरसदृशं केचिद्विभुं ते परे
ते तं मानसगोचरं तदपरे नित्याऽनुमेयं जगुः ।
अन्ये चिद्विषयं परेतु परमस्वज्योतिराभ्यान्तरं
सत्येवं श्रुतियुक्तिभिर्विविदिषोर्युक्तो विचारो मुहुः ॥ १३ ॥

Some (the followers of the Pashupata and Pancharatra Agamas) say that the Atman is atomic in size. Some (the Jainas) say that the Atman is of the size of the gross body and some (the followers of Nyaya) hold that the Atman is infinite and all-pervading. (All these schools believe that) the Atman can be known through the mind. (The followers of Sankhya hold that) the Atman can be known only through inference. (The Vainashika Buddhists, the Shunyavadins, opine that) the Atman can be known only through a mental impression. (The Advaita Vedantins declare that) the Atman is self-revealing and luminous. Since there are so many contradictory opinions, the aspirants to the knowledge of Brahman should contemplate (on the Atman) again and again with the help of the scriptures and reasoning.

The true nature of the Atman is self-revealing, like the sun. It does not need any external

help. This Atman reveals itself even though covered by the five sheaths—from the sheath of food, *annamaya koṣa*, to the sheath of bliss, *ānandamaya koṣa*. But this realization of the Atman does not come at once—there are conflicting theories about it. Therefore, one needs to go through a systematic process of studying the scriptures and reasoning out their meaning. Various branches of the Upanishads have to be studied, and one needs to be first intellectually convinced about the true nature of the Atman. This has to be done following the time-honoured tradition of the teacher and the taught, *guru-śiṣya-parampara*. After listening to the instruction 'Thou are That', the disciple needs to constantly contemplate on it till the knowledge of Brahman is attained. The scriptures describe this succinctly: 'Om is the bow, the soul is the arrow, and Brahman is called its target. It is to be hit by an unerring man. One should become one with it just like an arrow.'⁷⁵ Acharya Shankara comments on this statement: 'Just as the success of the arrow consists in its becoming one with the target, similarly one should bring about the result, consisting in becoming one with the Imperishable, by eliminating the ideas of the body etc. being the Self.'⁷⁶

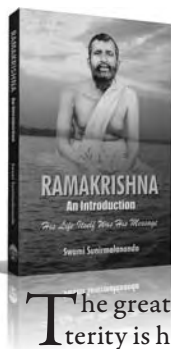
(To be continued)

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REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Ramakrishna: An Introduction

Swami Sunirmalananda

Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata 700 029. Website: www.sriramakrishna.org. 2011. viii + 213 pp. ₹ 75.

The greatest gift an avatara vouchsafes to posterity is his life. The accounts of his life, so far as they are faithful, find ready acceptance among innumerable devotees. In each account people find a unique opportunity to visualize the earthly life of their beloved Lord. On the other hand, the author of such accounts, if he happens to be a devotee, which is often the case, finds a blessed task in a work that enables him to relive the events of a great life. It is no wonder, therefore, that newer narrations of an avatara's life continue to appear even after centuries, and even after the earlier authors seem to have left nothing unsaid on the subject.

Ramakrishna: An Introduction is a delightful addition to the several short biographies available on the Great Master. Presenting only the facts in a very simple and lucid style, having brief chapters with attractive titles, and printed in large fonts, one is apt to think that the book is meant for teenagers. All the same, whether young or old, everyone is sure to derive joy reading this book.

For the most part the author has given a chronological presentation of significant events in the Master's life. Though the title suggests that this is an introduction, there are many interesting incidents mentioned that the reader would not have found in the classical biographies. A few noteworthy are: Keshabchandra Sen deputing three Brahmo Samaj members to make an estimate of Sri Ramakrishna (170); the last visit of Sri Ramakrishna to Kamarpukur (179); and Sri Ramakrishna's aborted trip, along with the Holy

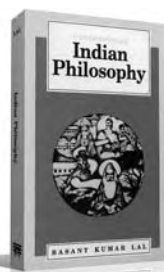
Mother, to Kamarpukur when heavy rains forced them to take shelter in a person's house who was just then praying to God to send him a saint (68). Thus even well-read people in Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature will find in this book a few glimpses that somehow had eluded them.

Another significant feature of the book is that the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna are given at the end of each chapter, selected mostly to reflect the theme of the chapter. By this approach the book succeeds in giving a complete introduction to Sri Ramakrishna. However, the last decade in Sri Ramakrishna's earthly life, in which he actively preached and consolidated his mission, has received comparatively less attention.

Both the author and the publisher deserve compliments from the English-knowing readers of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature.

Brahmachari Shantichaitanya

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Contemporary Indian Philosophy

Basant Kumar Lal

Motilal Banarasi Dass Publishers, 41 U A Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007. Website: www.mlbd.com. 2012. xxi + 346 pp. ₹ 215.

Philosophy is the record of the soul's adventure to discover the cosmos and the relationship of the jiva to the Paramatman, universal Soul. Since ancient times great intellectuals in various parts of the world have written and speculated on these questions. In India, even from the days of the Upanishads, enquiries on these lines were formulated and sublime answers offered. There has been an unbroken continuity in such enquiries and speculations over many centuries. Along traditional lines came Acharyas Shankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva, who laid the foundation for the

systems of philosophy referred to respectively as Advaita, Vishishtadvaita, and Dvaita. The traditional philosophers were not mere thinkers or logicians but rishis and mystics. In recent times, for various reasons, the study and practice of philosophy has considerably shrunk, leaving little scope for fresh insights into ancient philosophical doctrines and tenets.

In the light of the above scenario, It is meaningful that a book such as *Contemporary Indian Philosophy* can reach the public; in it the thoughts and philosophies of some well-known personalities are presented clearly. Those selected for study are Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, Dr S Radhakrishnan, and Sir Mohammad Iqbal. The author rightly mentions that from the vast writings and sayings of these personalities, only such topics were selected that appear to be philosophical and that taken together could give a comprehensive picture of a particular thought system. The author also adds that 'it is difficult to give an account of [their] philosophy in terms of any accepted philosophical model' (224). Equally pertinent is the point he raises while discussing Sir Mohammad Iqbal: 'Is Iqbal only a commentator on Islam, or is he an original thinker? There is no harm in saying almost unhesitatingly that he is both' (304). This statement holds true for all the others as well.

A look at the studies made in the book brings out the salient aspects of the thinkers covered. Swami Vivekananda was a dynamic monk, nonpareil in the exposition of Indian philosophy, particularly the teachings of the Upanishads, to world audiences. His understanding of different paths or yogas for Self-realization—jnana, bhakti, karma, and yoga—are outstanding. Rabindranath Tagore was essentially a poet, composer, visionary, and versatile writer. His creativity had an unfailing flavour of the Upanishadic ideals. Mahatma Gandhi's personal and social philosophy, which is based on firm faith in God, superiority of spirituality over brute strength, efficacy of *satyagraha*, truthfulness, brahmacharya, and so on, have been well elucidated. Sri Aurobindo evolved into a sage, in the course of his interesting life, through the realization that the process of biological evolution

does not terminate in the emergence of the human being but continues upward to the emergence of a 'super being'. He stressed various aspects of yoga for spiritual attainment. Krishnachandra Bhattacharya, a modern philosopher, made 'negation the basis of arriving at the Absolute itself' (237). The Absolute has to be conceived as absolute negation because any known content would make it definite. In this analysis one finds prominent echoes of the '*neti, neti*; not this, not this' approach of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. Dr S Radhakrishnan was celebrated for his attainment in building an intellectual and cultural bridge between the traditional wisdom of the East and the knowledge of the West. His vast erudition and commentaries are classics in philosophy. Sir Mohammad Iqbal was a reputed poet who also conceived philosophical notions, particularly on the nature of intuition. His general aim was his 'reconstruction of religious thought in Islam' (303).

The publishers must be congratulated for showing how philosophy is not merely abstract but practical and dynamic.

K Gopalan
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BOOK RECEIVED



Adversities Are Opportunities Swami Sunirmalananda

Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004. Website: www.chennaiamath.org. 2011. x + 89 pp. ₹ 25.

In simple language the author retells immortal stories from the epics for today's complex world.



See and Paint (4): Hanuman Chalisa

Illustrator: Sitaramacharyalu

Ramakrishna Math. 2011. 88 pp. ₹ 80.

The book presents a verse from the *Hanuman Chalisa* in Sanskrit and its translation into English on its left pages, while the right pages are reserved for children to paint relevant pictures of the text, a way they can assimilate noble ideas.

REPORTS



*Annakut at
Baranagar Mission*



Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

In May 2012 the Central Board of Secondary Education instructed all of its schools to organize programmes throughout the year in commemoration of the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. Further, the Board has now initiated an award—Vivekananda School of Excellence, 2013—for the schools who have taken part in the organization of the above programmes.

The following centres organized various programmes to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. **Amstelveen** (Netherlands): Spiritual retreats, including talks on Swamiji, on 16 and 17 June and 18 November. **Aurangabad**: Lecture on 7 December, attended by 400 college students, and public lectures on 7 and 8 December, attended by 300 people on each day. A spiritual retreat on 8 December, attended by 100 people. A youth awareness programme on 9 December, attended by 550 youth. **Baranagar Mission**: Value education programmes at two girls' schools in December, attended by 290 students in all. A parents' conference on 19 December, attended by 68 parents. On 23 December the ashrama held an Annakut (festival of food) and served the cooked prasada to 3,000 slum-dwellers. **Belgaum**: Interschool cultural competitions between 12 and 18 December, in which nearly 2,500 students took part. **Bhubaneswar**: A state-level seminar on 'Harmony of Religions' on 30 November, attended by about 500 delegates, mostly college students from different districts of Odisha. **Calicut**: A devotees' convention on

16 December, in which nearly 200 devotees participated. **Chandigarh**: Quiz competitions on Swamiji's life and message, in which altogether 8,897 students from 32 schools of Chandigarh, Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh participated. **Chengalpattu**: Processions, devotional music, and film shows on Swamiji at Kavadhur, Dimmavaram, Mel Silawattam, Pulikkundram, Kurampirai, Mariputhur, Adavilagam, and Kilapakkam on 24 and 25 November and on 1, 2, 8, 9, 15, and 16 December respectively. **Cooch Behar**: A value education seminar at a local girls' school on 17 December, attended by nearly 400 students. **Delhi**: A laser show titled 'Swamiji', made by Sri Manick Sorcar, a renowned laserist of USA, on 9 December; about 1,500 people watched the show. **Institute of Culture, Kolkata**: A seminar on 'Significance of the Ideas of Swami Vivekananda in the Modern Age' from 14 to 16 December, in which 134 distinguished scholars participated. **Itanagar**: A regional tribal cultural programme at Naharlagun on 23 November, attended by about 500 people. **Kanpur**: Speeches in five colleges and two schools in Kanpur, attended altogether by 4,773 students and 171 teachers. **Limbdi**: Cultural competitions from 26 to 29 December, in which 372 students from 20 schools took part. **Lucknow**: A workshop on 'Youth Counselling and Positive Thinking' on 13 December, attended by 300 parents and teachers. **Mangalore**: An all-Karnataka youth convention on 22 and 23 December, in which about 1,800

delegates from 22 districts of Karnataka participated. Nine district-level youth conventions from 1 to 10 December, one each in the following districts of Karnataka: Bellary, Raichur, Davanagere, Chikmagalur, Shimoga, Uttara Kannada, Gadag, Bagalkot, and Bijapur; in all, about 11,500 youths attended these conventions. **Muzaffarpur:** Cultural competitions from 3 to 29 December, in which nearly 5,400 students took part. **Nattarampalli:** A youth convention on 7 December, presided over by Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, and attended by about 1,500 students. A Vivek Youth Torch Relay, an event in which a torch was carried to 150 villages in and around Nattarampalli, covering 150 km in 5 days; in all, 150 youths participated in the event. A spiritual retreat on 9 December, in which nearly 1,000 devotees took part. **Pune:** Residential youth camp on 24 and 25 November for 50 rural boys. Japa Yajna on 11 November and 9 December for 150 devotees. Spiritual retreat from 30 November to 2 December for 350 delegates. **Raipur:** A programme comprising speeches, recitations, debate, drawing competition, and other activities, in which nearly 800 students participated. **Rajkot:** Cultural competitions from 26 to 29 December, in which about 1,000 students of 80 schools took part. **Ramharipur:** A spiritual retreat on 23 December, attended by about 2,700 devotees. **Ranchi Morabadi:** Five conferences for the ex-trainees of Divyayan on 5, 7, 11, 14, and 17 December, in which altogether 390 ex-trainees took part. **Salem:** Discourses and competitions at 18 places in Namakkal district on 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, and 13 December, attended by 2,902 students. **Sargachhi:** A two-day workshop on Vivekananda's idea of education and its implementation in the emerging education system on 14 and 15 December, attended by about 450 teachers and parents. **Sinhi:** Six parents' conferences from

29 November to 20 December, attended by 509 parents. **Swamiji's Ancestral House:** A public meeting on 1 December, attended by about 800 persons. Cultural programmes on 1 and 11 December, attended by nearly 400 youths in all.

News from Branch Centres

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur, conducted a four-day sports meet from 23 to 26 November, in which 1,800 students from 37 schools of 3 districts participated. Sri Kedar Kashyap, minister for Tribal Development, Government of Chhattisgarh, inaugurated the meet. Besides, on 20 December Swami Gautamananda, Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, inaugurated an extension to the boys' hostel building 'B', an extension to the girls' hostel building, a building with kitchen store and honorary workers' quarters, and a farmer trainees' hostel building.

On 8 December Swami Suhitananda inaugurated the newly constructed hostel building Swami Shivananda Students' Home at **Ramakrishna Math, Nattarampalli**, and Dr K Rosaiah, governor of Tamil Nadu, unveiled the newly installed life-size statue of Swami Vivekananda at the ashrama. Besides, on the same day the ashrama launched a mobile bookstall-cum-exhibition.

Swami Suhitananda inaugurated the newly constructed dining-hall of the Vidyarthi Bhavan hostel at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Sargachhi**, on 14 December.

Ramakrishna Yogashrama, Koalpara, (sub-centre of **Matri Mandir, Jayrambati**) celebrated its centenary from 15 to 17 December. Special worship, homa, public meeting, and cultural programmes were conducted and a commemorative volume was released. Besides, the newly built first floor of the monks' quarters was inaugurated on this occasion.

Achievements

Sayantan Das, a class-8 student of the school at **Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar**, received the National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement for the year 2012 in the field of singing. The award, instituted by the Government of India, was handed over by the president of India on 14 November at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi, and carried a certificate, a silver medal, and a sum of 10,000 rupees.

Abhijit Mandal, an MA (Sanskrit) 2nd year student of the **Vidyamandira at Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha, Belur**, secured the first position at the regional level in two competitions held by Rashtriya Sanskrit Samsthanam, New Delhi, on 27 November at a Sanskrit College in Kolkata.

Students of the Blind Boys' Academy at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur**, secured the following positions in the 12th National Paralympic Swimming Championship held at Chennai from 4 to 9 December:

| Event | Group | Positions | Group | Positions | Group | Positions |
|---------------------------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| 50 Metre Freestyle Stroke | Senior | 1 & 2 | Junior | 1 & 2 | Sub-junior | 2 |
| 50 Metre Back Stroke | | 1, 2, & 3 | | 1 & 2 | | 2 & 3 |
| 50 Metre Breast Stroke | | 2 & 3 | | 1, 2, & 3 | | 3 |
| 50 Metre Butterfly Stroke | | 2 & 3 | | 1 & 2 | | - |

Relief

Distress Relief • The following centres distributed in December various items to needy people. **Baghbazar**: 1,050 saris, 500 chaddars, and 350 food packets; **Belgaum**: 100 saris and 1,000 bed-sheets; **Indore**: 450 kg dal, 300 kg sugar, and 150 l edible oil; **Naora**: 300 solar lanterns. **Baghbazar** centre also served cooked food to 33 needy persons daily from 22 August to 28 December—a total of 4,257 meals—and provided, under Build Your Own House scheme, building materials (cement, sand, stone chips, iron rods, and others) to two needy people.

Winter Relief • During November and December 12,471 blankets were distributed to needy people through the following centres. **Baghbazar**: 2,163; **Baranagar Math**: 350; **Belgaum**: 200; **Chapra**: 5,000; **Kashipur**: 250; **Delhi**: 426; **Indore**: 550; **Jalpaiguri**: 250; **Khetri**: 34; **Malda**: 450; **Manasadwip**: 200; **Nagpur**: 908; **Naora**: 560; **Ranchi Morabadi**: 430; **Sargachhi**: 200; **Shyamla Tal**: 500. Besides, the following centres distributed winter clothing to the needy. **Garbeta**: 100 jackets; **Khetri**: 875 sweaters; **Naora**: 265 woollen chaddars; **Sargachhi**: 95 jackets.

Synopsis of the Ramakrishna Mission Governing Body's Report for 2011-12

The 103rd Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday, 16 December 2012 at 3.30 p.m.

Sri Ramakrishna's 175th birth anniversary was celebrated by the Headquarters and the branch centres by conducting seminars, interfaith meets, parliaments of religions, processions, etc.

In commemoration of the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, UNESCO Headquarters at Paris inaugurated an exhibition on

Swamiji at the Town Hall of Paris. In collaboration with Kolkata Metro Railway, telecast of programmes on Swamiji in the CCTVs at the different metro stations of the city was arranged. Centres in Karnataka organized Swami Vivekananda Jyoti Yatra covering almost all the districts of Karnataka and traversing 4,000 km. The four-year-long service programmes started in different parts of the country in 2010 continued. A sum of 28.40 crore rupees was spent on these

central-government-aided service projects from 8 October 2010 to 31 August 2012.

In the educational field the following new developments deserve special mention: (i) Vivekananda University started PhD courses in Agricultural Biotechnology and Rural Development, and a one-year PG Diploma course in Sports Science at its Narendrapur campus; (ii) Vidyamandira college of Saradapitha centre started MSc course in Applied Chemistry affiliated to Calcutta University; (iii) Vivekananda College of Chennai Vidyapith was awarded 'A' grade (the highest grade) by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council.

In the medical field the following new developments deserve special mention: (i) Inauguration of a modernized cardiac operation theatre comprising five-bed cardiac surgery ITU, heart lung machine, ventilators, etc. in Lucknow hospital; (ii) installation of 16-slice CT scanner system, RX lithotripter compatible basket with accessories, etc. at Seva Prasthan hospital in Kolkata; (iii) setting up of a dual slice spiral CT scan unit at Vrindaban hospital; (iv) starting of rural mobile medical service by Deoghar centre.

In the rural development field the following new projects deserve special mention: (i) 2,227.76 acres of land was brought under paddy seed production, 13 irrigation units and 117 percolation tanks were constructed, and a mobile soil analysis laboratory was started by Ranchi (Morabadi) centre; (ii) Lokasiksha Parishad of Narendrapur centre started a number of projects: promotion of rural eco-entrepreneurs by imparting training on lac and tasar cultivation, processing of medicinal non-timber forest products, remote village electrification, starting of an adult education centre, etc.; (iii) Narainpur centre (Chhattisgarh) dug 16 deep tube-wells, 4 ponds, and 6 wells in remote villages.

During the year under review the Ramakrishna Math upgraded two sub-centres—one at Sinthi, Kolkata, and another at Gourhati, Hooghly, both in West Bengal—to independent branch centres.

Under the Math, the following new projects deserve special mention: (i) Production of India's first stereoscopic 3D animated movie on Swami Vivekananda by Chennai Math; (ii) starting of mobile book stalls by Pune and Thrissur centres, (iii) installation of ultrasound scanning machine with echocardiogram and colour doppler at Thiruvananthapuram hospital; (iv) construction of a school building and a vocational training centre building at Parevada village for the Madari (snake charmers) community and a shed for students at Bhuj by Rajkot centre.

Outside India the following new developments deserve special mention: (i) Japan centre conducted relief operations in the wake of a devastating earthquake and tsunami; (ii) Nadi centre in Fiji conducted flood relief and rehabilitation programmes; (iii) a postal stamp on Swami Vivekananda was brought out by Pos Malaysia (a post services company in Malaysia), on the initiative of our Malaysia centre; (iv) Durban centre in South Africa built an educational and skills development centre for a high school at Kwa Mashu.

During the year the Mission and Math undertook several relief and rehabilitation programmes in different parts of the country involving an expenditure of 4.93 crore rupees, benefiting 3.64 lakh people belonging to 1.27 lakh families in 1,658 villages.

Welfare work was done by way of providing scholarships to poor students, pecuniary help to old, sick, and destitute people, etc. (about 55.88 lakh beneficiaries); the expenditure incurred was 27.85 crore rupees.

Medical service was rendered to more than 77.82 lakh people through 15 hospitals,

123 dispensaries, and 59 mobile medical units; the expenditure incurred was 119.87 crore rupees.

Nearly 3.23 lakh students were studying in our educational institutions from kindergarten to university level. A sum of 220.42 crore rupees was spent on educational work.

A number of rural and tribal development projects were undertaken with a total expenditure of 37.46 crore rupees benefiting about 67.74 lakh rural people.

We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to our members and friends for their kind cooperation and help.

Swami Suhitananda

General Secretary

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission

Progress Report

Follows a brief progress report of the Central Government grant-aided service projects in commemoration of the 150th birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda from 8 October 2010 to 31 August 2012:

1. Print Media Project: Printed 10.82 lakh copies of books on Swamiji's life and teachings in 23 languages and 13.25 lakh copies on 15 other titles in 10 languages. A sum of 254.26 lakh rupees was spent.

2. Cultural Programmes Project: Organized six state-level seminars on religious harmony/interfaith harmony, interfaith dialogues in four states, and a regional programme on tribal and folk culture. A sum of 73.34 lakh rupees was spent.

3. Electronic Media Project: Audio DVDs on 'Personality Development' (Part 1) and 'Education as Viewed by Swami Vivekananda' with multimedia effect were produced. Work on producing a full-length feature film on the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda is in progress. A sum of 87.99 lakh rupees was spent.

4. Gadadhar Abhyudaya Prakalpa (Integrated

Child Development): 174 units started in 23 states. About 17,500 children were benefited. A sum of 1,107.12 lakh rupees was spent.

5. Vivekananda Swasthya Parisheva Prakalpa (Health Services Project for Mothers and Children): 126 units started in 22 states. About 13,000 children were benefited. A sum of 720.70 lakh rupees was spent.

6. Sarada Palli Vikas Prakalpa (Women Self-Empowerment): 10 units started in 8 states. In all, 1,619 women were benefited. A sum of 99.76 lakh rupees was spent.

7. Swami Akhandananda Seva Prakalpa (Poverty Alleviation): 10 units started in 6 states. Altogether 1,135 people were benefited. A sum of 97.28 lakh rupees was spent.

8. Special Programmes for the Youth: Started 6 youth counselling cells in 5 states; organized state level youth convention/camps in 5 states (total participants: 10,111); held 6 state level and 3 regional level youth competitions (total participants: 161,654); conducted sustained graded value education programmes through (i) 381 units (non-formal type) in 13 states with 16,360 students of 253 institutions, and (ii) 2,290 units (classroom-based) in 14 states with 102,965 students of 656 schools; printed 15.49 lakh books for 182 titles in 5 languages under the non-formal programme. A sum of 400.62 lakh rupees was spent.

In all, a sum of 28.40 crore rupees was spent on the above projects.

Besides, a number of centres organized various programmes without government aid: Chennai Math centre launched a state-of-the-art multimedia gallery 'Experience Vivekananda' at Vivekanandar Illam; Port Blair centre organized 'Vivekananda Value Inculcation Programme' for students; Rajkot centre started 'Vivekananda Service Corps', a unit of 52 young men who are being trained in first aid, disaster management, and other relief-related services.

